

Ariel Magazine

Winter 2024 / Volume 1 / #53

אריאל  Ariel Ministries



Passing the Baton

The Leadership Transition at Ariel Ministries

Plus: Word Study "Israel" / Talmudic Teachings Regarding the Angel of the Lord /
Dispensationalism: Ryrie's Three-Legged Stool / Book Review:
God's Atonement Plan for Mankind

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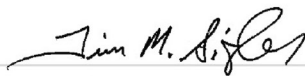
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Purpose Statement

Ariel Ministries exists in order to evangelize Jewish people and to disciple Jewish and Gentile believers through intensive Bible teaching from a Jewish perspective.

Board of Directors:

Russell Cruzan
Gary Derechinsky
Samuel Feinberg
Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum
Guy Hoffman
Jake Hogue
Tim Sigler
Richard Storm

Publication:

Publisher
Ariel Ministries
11926 Radium Street
San Antonio, Texas 78216-2713

Editor-in-Chief
Christiane Jurik

Copy Editor
Pauline Ilse

Proofreader
C. V.

Contributing Writers
J. Morgan Arnold, Mottel Baleston,
Matthew Bryce Evrin, Arnold
Fruchtenbaum, Jake Hogue,
Tim Sigler, Mike Stallard

Art Directors
Jesse & Josh Gonzales

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The Oscillations of Life

As I write this Editor's Letter, two months have passed since the remarkable moment when Dr. Fruchtenbaum entrusted the ministry he founded five decades ago to his successor, Dr. Tim Sigler. This edition of *Ariel Magazine* is filled with articles and pictures that capture the beauty of that occasion. Witnessing my esteemed mentor place his hand on Dr. Sigler's shoulder and affirm, "I trust him to do really well," filled me with joy and excitement.

Shortly after this historic event, joy gave way to sadness as we commemorated October 7, 2023—the day when Israel was brutally attacked by merciless terrorists. We remembered not only the victims of that day but also mourned the fallen IDF soldiers, some of whom we personally knew as brothers in the Messiah.

Life's oscillations between profound joy and deep sorrow sometimes feel like a roller coaster. I know this well, for I have ridden that roller coaster many times. My testimony is this: Regardless of the highs and lows, God has always—*always*—carried me through each valley and over every mountain peak. It is He who causes joy to bubble up in the heart even in moments of deepest darkness.

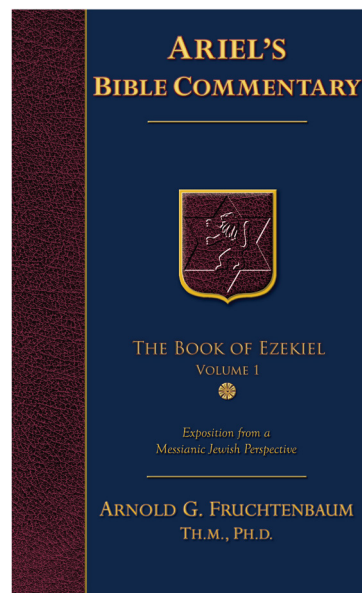
This year has been full of twists and turns for many of us—a season of change, filled with both joyous moments and times of trial. I wonder how God has shown you, esteemed reader, His care for you as you race up and down the roller coaster of life.

In my case, He has carried me through this year by giving me a uniquely meaningful project: editing a commentary on one of the Bible's most powerful books. Dr. Fruchtenbaum's work on Ezekiel is an exceptional piece of scholarship, and this month, I was able to release the first volume of his commentary in both print and eBook formats. However, it is the message of Ezekiel itself that has been a profound gift to me. The book reveals our God as victorious, patient, compassionate, overflowing with *chesed*, and unwavering in His commitment fulfill His purposes across the ages. Our God is simply amazing, and as difficult as the trials may be, I would not trade a single moment of my life with Him the years before I knew my Savior.

Praying that you all can say the same, I wish you a meaningful Hanukkah and Christmas season and a blessed 2025! May the Light of the World fill your home with His unique joy.

Christiane Jurik

Editor-in-Chief
Ariel Ministries
editorarielministries@gmail.com



Ariel Mission Branches & Representatives

MEET THE TEAM



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ARIEL BRANCHES



Ariel Australia Chris & Lisa Savage

Website: www.ariel.org.au

Email: info@ariel.org.au

Chris and Lisa Savage represent Ariel Ministries in Australia. Based in Victoria, they teach the Scriptures from the Jewish perspective in weekly and bi-monthly classes and day seminars.



Ariel Canada Jacques Isaac & Sharon Gabizon

Website: www.arielcanada.com

Email: info@bethariel.ca

J. I. and Sharon Gabizon represent Ariel Ministries in Canada. Their projects include door-to-door evangelism of Jewish homes in Montreal and translating Ariel's manuscripts into French. Ariel Canada established a messianic congregation in Montreal called Beth Ariel.



Jackie Fierman

Jackie Fierman has been with Ariel Canada since January of 2005, traveling and sharing about the ministry and teaching its material in Canada and the U.S.A.



Ariel India Bakul N. Christian

Email: bakulchristian@yahoo.co.in

Bakul Christian represents Ariel Ministries in India and resides with his wife in Ahmedabad. Using Ariel's extensive teaching material, he expounds the Scriptures from a Messianic Jewish perspective in his home state. He is also responsible for the translations into the Gujarati language.



Ariel Israel Sasha & Lilian Granovsky

Website: <https://www.ariel-israel.org.il/>

Email: sashag@ariel.org

The husband-and-wife team has been representing Ariel Ministries in Israel since October 2009. They are responsible for coordinating the translation of our manuscripts and books into Hebrew and Russian.



Ariel China

For safety issues, we must protect the identity of this branch. Please keep them in your prayers.



Ariel Germany

Website: www.cmv-duesseldorf.de

Email: cmv-cmv@t-online.de

Thanks to Manfred Künstler and his wife Hanna, Ariel Ministries has had a presence in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland since 1985. In 2002, the work was passed on to Georg Hagedorn who, eight years later, turned it into a full branch. Today, this branch is led by a team of brothers and sisters.



Ariel Hungary Ivan & Rita Nagy

Email: hungary@ariel.org

Ivan and Rita Nagy represent Ariel Ministries in Hungary. The husband-and-wife team has developed a Come & See website in Hungarian. They also host several home Bible study groups, teaching from Ariel's materials. Their goal is to make teachings available to Jewish and Gentile believers and unbelievers in Hungary.



Ariel Italy Paolo & Martina Speciale

Website: www.arielitalia.it

Email: info@arielitalia.it

Paolo and Martina Speciale represent Ariel Ministries in Italy. The husband-and-wife team coordinates the translations of our manuscripts and books into Italian. Their goal is to share the Messianic Jewish perspective in Italy through live teaching, social media pages, and seminars.



Ariel New Zealand Johan Jansen van Vuuren

Website: ariel.org.nz

Email: nz@ariel.org.nz

Mobile: +64 27 444 7735

Mail: P O Box 40305

Glenfield, Auckland 0747 NEW ZEALAND

This branch is led by Johan Jansen van Vuuren, Nigel Christensen, Matthew Lord, Don Thompson, and John Cavanagh. For information about the many activities of this branch, please contact nz@ariel.co.nz.



Ariel Ministries Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas

Email: dfw@ariel.org

This branch is devoted to teaching the Word of God from a biblical Jewish perspective in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. They also travel throughout the United States. If you are interested in hosting a teaching session, symposium, or seminar, contact them at dfw@ariel.org.



Ariel Liberia Wion & Shirley Wleh

Email: wionwleh@yahoo.com

Wion and Shirley Wleh represent Ariel Ministries in Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa. The husband-and-wife team teaches the Scriptures from a Messianic Jewish perspective in workshops, seminars, and weekly classes designed for pastors and laypersons alike.

ARIEL REPRESENTATIVES



Joe Azevedo – Shoshanah Campus Supervisor (New York)

Email: Shoshanahcampus@ariel.org

Joe is the supervisor of the Shoshanah Campus, which is the home of Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies in Keeseville, NY. Every summer, he and his wife Cindy organize and host Ariel's ten-week Bible study program on campus.



Roberto Anchondo – Field Representative (El Paso, Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico)

Email: robertopmtrust@yahoo.com

Roberto Anchondo represents Ariel Ministries in parts of the Southwest regions of the U.S. and some cities in Mexico. He is currently discipling groups of men in the Jewish perspective. He also works with numerous churches in Mexico, teaching the importance of standing by Israel.



John Metzger – Field Representative (North Carolina)

Website: www.promisestoisrael.org

Email: EhbedAriel@gmail.com

Missionary and author John Metzger represents Ariel Ministries in North Carolina. He is a teacher and speaker who actively travels throughout the central and eastern part of the U.S., speaking at various churches and conferences.



Jack Nakashima – Field Representative (Rock Hill, SC)

Email: jacknariel@gmail.com

Jack Nakashima represents Ariel Ministries in Rock Hill, SC. Previously serving in Israel, he is now available to teach and disciple in the U.S.



Stephen Reynolds – Field Representative (UK)

Email: homeoffice@ariel.org

Stephen Reynolds represents Ariel Ministries in the UK. The British Sign Language interpreter serves as a missionary in the Philippines and assists like-minded brethren in England in the establishment of dispensational churches.



Ariel
Canada

The Birth of

Beth Ariel Ottawa



Many servants of the Most High God have embarked on their ministry journey through Beth Ariel, a congregation founded

by our branch leader in Canada, Jacques Isaac Gabizon. One such servant is Charles Shefler. In this brief report, he

shares his journey from Beth Ariel in Montreal to establishing a new congregation in Ottawa.



Charles Shefler and his wife Susan

“I will also make You a light for the nations, to bring My salvation to the ends of the earth.” (Isa. 49:6b)

As I reflect on our story, I am reminded of Joseph’s words in Genesis 50:20-21: What his brothers intended for evil, God used for good. While the ongoing tragic events of October 7 cannot be overstated, the birth of Beth Ariel Ottawa Congregation somehow came out of it.

I grew up in a secular Jewish home in Montreal. I accepted the Lord in

October 2000. Soon after, I pursued biblical studies in Montreal. Yet as I look back, I realize how little I learned about the vital role of our Jewish people and Israel in God’s plan.

I began attending Beth Ariel Congregation in Montreal in 2016. I was amazed by Jacques Isaac (J. I.) Gabizon’s teaching, and in time, I also had the honor and privilege of meeting Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum. I can honestly attest that the depth and richness of Ariel Ministries’ and Jacques Isaac’s



The congregation enjoys sharing fellowship and food after the services.

teaching resources are world-class. Seeing my hunger, J. I. kindly took me under his wing, disciplined me, and mentored me. I remain forever grateful to him and Beth Ariel Montreal for all their continuous generous guidance, care, and love.

In 2021, I left the city life in Montreal to settle down with my wonderful wife Susan in the small town of Renfrew, Ontario. I connected with the Ottawa Messianic community. Although I met some lovely believers, I didn't find anything resembling the high caliber of Ariel's teaching.

On a visit to Montreal in September of 2023, J. I. put his hand on my shoulder and said, "It is time for you to start teaching." He knew good

teaching was needed in the Ottawa area.

Tragedy Struck

On October 7, 2023, Hamas invaded Israel. In the days that followed, we were invited to Michio and Lydia Iku-ra's home in Ottawa to pray for Israel. During that night of prayer, we discovered Michio and Lydia knew the Gabizons and Beth Ariel. They asked me if I could teach and lead some Bible studies. Based on my conversation the previous week with J. I., I said, "Apparently so!"

This is how Beth Ariel Ottawa came into being. Our biweekly Bible studies began with a handful of people in Michio and Lydia's home, but soon

after, the Lord led us to congregate at Rideauview Bible Chapel in Ottawa.

We now offer weekly Shabbat services and special events. We celebrate the feasts and hold weekly prayer meetings via Zoom. We also have a music worship team. Our mission is Messianic biblical teaching, pastoral care, discipleship, fellowship, and, importantly, Jewish outreach and evangelism.

Beth Ariel Ottawa is also committed to honoring our Jewish people and bringing right teaching as well as Israel's vital place in God's plan to this city. We stand firmly against antisemitism, hoping to be a light among the nations and to bring salvation to our city and beyond.



Congregation Beth Ariel Ottawa



שושנה SHOSHANAH

My Journey with Ariel

By Beth Fearnley



By now, the number of believers who have attended our Bible study program at the Shoshanah Campus is in the thousands. Beth Fearnly, from England, is one student who has spent many summers at the campus, first to learn and then to volunteer her time in support of the ministry.

During my student years, I embarked on a personal search for the meaning of life. I knew this journey would either end in complete rejection or lead to the discovery of the most important truth ever. Raised in the Anglican tradition, I had always believed in God. In my naivety and desire to uncover the truth, I decided to join the “older” church that had existed across Europe and England before the reign of Henry VIII—the Roman Catholic Church.

However, my experience didn’t go as expected. Every Thursday after my college lectures, I attended one-on-one classes with the priest. Early on, he discouraged me from reading the Bible and insisted that I simply listen to him. He even told me that I could spend 5,000 years in purgatory, but my family could pay indulgences to shorten my time there. I questioned him, asking why the thief on the cross would spend eternity with Yeshua “today,” as the Bible said, after recognizing Him. Needless to say, this didn’t sit well with the priest.

My disillusionment deepened when I questioned the Marian doctrine, stating that from what I had read, Mary was simply a young Jewish girl named Miriam. At this point, the

priest had been preparing to have me christened into the Roman Catholic Church, but I found myself gripped with panic. I told him that I felt I was merely exchanging one doctrine for another, and that, if anything, I found the Anglican faith preferable. In response, the priest closed the door in my face.

I left feeling dejected. I had hoped for a conversation, for some kind of reasoned response, but instead, I was met with rejection.

A number of years passed.

After coming to faith and receiving the Messiah on my own in the 1980s, I eagerly dove into reading the Bible. Although I read through it entirely, I understood very little at the time. Living in a small village, I attended the only congregation available—the local Anglican church. Seeking guidance, I approached the vicar to ask for an explanation of Revelation. Unfortunately, this was yet another dead end. He dismissed it, saying the book was merely a dream and shouldn’t be taken seriously. Disheartened, I stopped attending that church.

Earnest Prayer

I earnestly prayed, asking God to lead me to the truth and to a place where I could receive deep biblical teaching. Not long after, we moved to a larger town. By then, I was married with a small baby. One Wednesday, while walking towards the town center and pushing my pram, I passed by a fairly large Anglican church building.

In that moment, I experienced something remarkable—the only time in my life, to this day, that I’ve heard God’s audible voice. It was unmistak-

able and clear: “If you want to grow in me, go in there.”

The Footsteps of the Messiah

I looked around, expecting to have overheard a conversation, but there was no one nearby—nobody at all. My curiosity began to wrestle with my common sense. It was a Wednesday after all, and church only happens on Sundays, right? But I couldn’t shake the feeling. Aren’t you curious to see if the church is even open?

Driven by that curiosity, I bumped my stroller up the half-dozen steps and pushed open the huge, old wooden door. To my surprise, the church was packed—over 200 people were inside, and a conference was in full swing. The vicar, a wonderful, godly man named Noel Pyatt (now with the Lord), was teaching with depth and clarity unlike anything I had ever heard. My heart was literally palpitating with excitement.

That Sunday, I returned to the same church, and to my astonishment, the vicar was delivering the same rich teaching as he had on Wednesday. The following Sunday, I went again, and the teaching continued, verse by verse! This was entirely new to me.

After the service, I approached the vicar and asked him where he got “this stuff.” He smiled and told me it was the teaching of a man with an unusual name and an even more unusual accent: Arnold Fruchtenbaum. The teaching series was called *The Life of Messiah*.

He loaned me some cassette tapes, and I found an address on a paper insert. I wrote to Ariel Ministries for more information, and that’s when



Mottel Baleston presented Beth with her certificate of completion in 2013.

I met Debbie Byers. This lovely lady responded to my inquiry, and from that point on, I regularly went to the bank to purchase a \$10 US bill, which I would send to Debbie to cover the cost of radio manuscripts and return postage. This continued for quite some time.

In addition to the manuscripts, I also began receiving their magazine, which was typed in black, white, and blue. After a few months, I was astonished to discover that Arnold Fruchtenbaum was coming to the UK. The vicar entrusted me with the task of

inviting him to our church, though he warned me that a prominent speaker like Dr. Fruchtenbaum would likely stay within London. How wrong he was! We hosted Arnold for a weekend conference in the mid-1980s, and the church was packed to overflowing.

For years, I longed to attend Camp Shoshanah, but with a young family to raise, both time and finances were beyond my reach. Eventually, when our daughters were grown, I was blessed with the opportunity to fly to New York. After attending the program for a while, I began volunteering in the Shmata Shoppe and continued to do this for many years, while also teaching ladies’ and children’s groups at home throughout the year.

Enduring Friendships

Some of the finest, most trusted friends I’ve ever had were made through Ariel Ministries and at the Shoshanah Campus, and for that, I am eternally grateful. I carry a deep desire to return and serve again. If it is God’s will, I will have the privilege to do so.



Dr. Fruchtenbaum explaining God’s Word

Passing the Baton

The Leadership Transition at Ariel Ministries
By Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum



Although I had met Dr. Tim Sigler on several occasions in Israel and at various conferences, my first personal visit with him was at the home of my editor, Christiane Jurik, in January 2023. Dr. Sigler had invited me to teach a course on Messianic Prophecy at the seminary where he served as provost and dean, which was the purpose of my trip to North Carolina. At the time, I was actively seeking a successor for my role as CEO of Ariel Ministries in general and Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies in particular.

Dr. Sigler and his wife, Bernice, were invited to Christiane's house for dinner. We enjoyed a pleasant evening of fellowship, and it was during that gathering that I first recognized someone who could potentially serve as my successor.

After returning to San Antonio, I gave the matter more thought and spoke with a few other potential candidates. Ultimately, I decided to invite Dr. Sigler to the Home Office of Ariel Ministries to meet with the team and discuss the role further, as he seemed like a strong, viable candidate.

Dr. Sigler had taught at Moody Bible Institute for eighteen years and had spent the last five years serving at Shepherds Theological Seminary in North Carolina. I was impressed by his strong commitment to the same theological framework that I and our team at Ariel Ministries adhere to. As our discussions continued, it became clear to me that he was the best candidate I had encountered to succeed me after the upcoming summer. Dr. Sigler also felt confident that his background in Jewish evangelism

and ministries, along with his own Jewish heritage, made him an ideal fit for the role.

At Moody, Dr. Sigler had been a professor of Hebrew and Biblical Studies. In addition, he served as an elder at Olive Tree Congregation for nearly 20 years, as a board member—and at times, chairman—of Life in Messiah International, and as Scholar-in-Residence for CJF Ministries. He also pastored a Messianic congregation in Israel and lived there with his family off and on for over a decade.



With a hand of blessing and approval, Dr. Fruchtenbaum passes the mantle to his successor, Dr. Tim Sigler.

After our initial meetings and much prayer, Dr. Sigler decided to join Ariel Ministries, and over the next year he traveled with me to various parts of the U.S. and around the world to meet our staff members. Our travels took us to places like Italy, Hungary, and New Zealand, and Tim also made a solo trip to Australia to connect with our team there. He gradually became more involved in the specific aspects of leadership at Ariel Ministries and began teaching in the Messianic Jewish Studies program at the Shoshannah Campus. Each of these steps

confirmed to me—and to him—that the Lord had chosen him as the ideal person to succeed me. It has been a seamless transition.

On September 13, 2024, Dr. Sigler officially became the CEO of Ariel Ministries. Both the Board of Directors and Dr. Sigler fully understand that I have not retired. I will continue my active ministry work, including teaching the Scriptures at the Shoshannah Campus, leading Bible conferences, traveling globally, and writing books. I will remain on the Board of Directors alongside Dr. Sigler. However, I will no longer serve as CEO of Ariel Ministries or Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies.

I ask all of those reading this to continue praying for Dr. Sigler in his new role. Please also pray for my ongoing activities as I continue much of the work that I have been doing up to this point.

I thank the Lord for leading us to the right person to assume the leadership of Ariel Ministries and for a smooth transition that, we pray, has brought honor to Him. We are also deeply grateful for the opportunity to gather the entire staff for the momentous occasion when I passed the baton to Dr. Tim Sigler.



Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum obtained a B.A. degree from Cedarville University in Hebrew and Hellenistics, a Th.M. degree from Dallas Theological Seminary in Hebrew and Old Testament Studies, and a Ph.D. degree from New York University upon the completion of his dissertation, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*. He is the Founding Director of Ariel Ministries and a much-respected biblical authority in evangelical and Messianic circles.



Stewarding the Future of Ariel Ministries

By Tim M. Sigler, Ph.D.



making it what it is today. The Lord has used Dr. Fruchtenbaum's teachings to impact thousands of people around the world, to bring theological depth to the Messianic movement, and to establish a growing network of Bible teachers and evangelists under the banner of Ariel Ministries.

Ministries are often known by the names of their founders. Moody Bible Institute is part of the legacy of Dwight Lyman Moody. He was the school's founder and first president. Established in 1886 and now in its 138th year, there have been many presidents since the famous D. L. Moody. Only insiders and those given to the history of the organization know about the second president, R. A. Torrey. This second president must have done something right because there is still a Moody Bible Institute that has lasted for over a century after him. I want to be like that second president. I do not care if people remember my name, but I pray that the work of Ariel Ministries will be thriving and faithful until Messiah returns. Even as I begin to serve as CEO, I realize that I will have to prepare to pass the baton of leadership to someone else one day. None of this belongs to us!

Leadership Is Stewardship

Both Dr. Fruchtenbaum and I enjoy good kosher fun, and we have enjoyed lots of laughs over the last year and a half since I was brought on as CEO. Oftentimes, humor is funny because it is so true. Bernice and I arrived for our first experience at Camp Shoshanah after a long drive on the evening of August 3, 2023. We reached our destination

When people hear that my wife Bernice and I serve with Ariel Ministries, many respond predictably, "Oh, Arnold Fruchtenbaum!" Of course, they

are right. But as we have learned of the ministry's global impact, we see that it is so much more and that there are so many more people involved in



a bit later than we had planned because a fierce summer storm passed through the Adirondacks with a relentless downpour that limited visibility and caused us to drive slowly as our tires churned through the water on the road. We made it to campus toward the end of the dinner hour just as others were heading to the lecture hall for evening classes. The staff had kindly held a nice meal for us and insisted on helping us check into our room. When we arrived at class, we were late. Mottel Baleston's captivating lecture had already begun, and there were only two seats left in the room—one at the back wall and one right next to Dr. Fruchtenbaum. Bernice took the seat in the back. I sat near Arnold and asked him, "Can I sit at your right hand?" Without missing a beat, he looked at me with a twinkle in his eye and said, "I'm giving you up to half my kingdom." I almost shed a tear because I realized that it was so true.

When you didn't build something, it's your job to not mess it up! In fact, as stewards, we are called to increase what God entrusts to us, to work for His harvest, and to show how we have multiplied our Master's supply. This fact is seen both in the parable of the ten minas (Lk. 19:12-27) and the similar parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30).¹ Both of these provide negative examples of stewards who were entrusted with their masters' wealth and merely kept it safe to pay back the original amount when their masters returned. One hid his master's

money in a piece of cloth (Lk. 19:20), and the other hid his master's money in a hole in the ground (Mt. 25:18). Neither of these approaches showed an increase, and with inflation, the same amount of money at a later date usually represents an economic loss.

Whether it is the impressive 830-acre Shoshanah campus, Ariel College and its over 500 online students, or the human resources represented by our dedicated home office staff and global branch leaders and representatives, new leadership represents a responsibility to build upon the past and steward these blessings from our Master into the future. You cannot just maintain what is entrusted to you; your responsibility is to grow it. Stewards can increase or decrease what God has entrusted to them, but they will give an account to their Master.

As we look to the future, how can we invest these resources to become even more effective with the saving message of the gospel that is the

power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16)? How can we ground both Jewish and Gentile believers in the faith that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3)? How can we promote a dispensational approach to the Bible based on literal, grammatical, historical interpretation, rightly dividing the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15)? How can we train up yet another generation who will promote intensive Bible teaching from a Messianic Jewish perspective *l'dor v'dor* ("to all generations," Ps. 146:10)? These are among the questions that faithful stewards must ask.

Stewardship Means That Some Things Will Change

The Proverbs are rich with insight about leadership and management. Proverbs 27:23-24 counsels as follows: "Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever;



Ariel's Board of Directors praying over the new CEO (photo by Netanya Sigler)

¹ Minas and talents were Greek monetary units, with a talent worth a whole lot more than a mina. One denarius was worth the daily wage of an average worker, and a mina was worth about four months' wages (perhaps over \$16,000 in 2024). The silver talent was worth approximately 6,000 denarii or 20 years' wages, but a gold talent was worth at least thirty times that amount.



and does a crown endure to all generations?" Stewards, like shepherds, are called to understand the value of the assets around them. Flocks and herds represented riches that could be squandered if not managed well, and a crown represented kingly authority. None of these symbols of wealth and power are guaranteed to last. They all have to be carefully guarded and prayerfully guided. The same is true of the stewardship of Ariel Ministries.

What are the needs of each division of the ministry? How might we enhance the reach of our evangelistic efforts? How can we increase the audiences of our publications? What new technologies might allow us to improve our efficiencies and better serve our constituents? How can we develop our teams to become more cohesive and prepared for coming challenges? What buildings at the Shoshanah Campus need improvements, and what services can be added to make learning more accessible for a growing number of students? How can we accommodate more families? What types of facilities will we need? How can we increase support for our ministry workers and build partnerships for our gospel efforts?

The answers to these questions will mean that new strategies and skills will be developed, new partnerships will be forged, new team members will be recruited, new branches will be opened, and new methods will be discovered. In our stewardship to the Master, His priorities in ministry never change, but the ways that we accomplish the tasks of ministry present new opportunities for each generation.

We are already celebrating some of these new partnerships, new team members, and even new facilities. The Lord has provided the necessary funds and the skilled friends to complete a new youth ministry space, a new retail area, and the Fruchtenbaum Library on the Shoshanah Campus. As we pray for its construction to begin soon, we can hardly wait to put it to use in 2025!

Stewardship Means That Some Things Should Never Change

At Ariel Ministries, we enjoy what I have called a Goldilocks doctrinal statement—not too hard, not too soft, but just right. We encourage you to look for yourself and recall that Ariel's doctrinal statement, like the teaching for which Dr. Fruchtenbaum is so well known, avoids legalism and needless controversies among believers while also standing firm against false teaching and liberal theology. As Goldilocks would say, "It's just right!" And this should never change.

Ariel Ministries was founded in order to evangelize and disciple our Jewish brethren, and its emphasis on faithful Bible teaching from a Messianic Jewish perspective has been born from necessity to meet an urgent need. As many Jewish people were coming to saving faith in Messiah Yeshua during the 1970s and as theological confusion and compromise were perplexing both new Jewish believers and established evangelical institutions, a thoroughgoing understanding of God's plan for Israel and the church was desperately needed. Dr. Fruchtenbaum's early works such as *Jesus*

Was a Jew in 1974 or *Hebrew Christianity* in 1975 (later retitled *The Remnant of Israel*) and then his NYU dissertation on *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* helped to address many confusing issues. His contributions were formational in my own theological development. Like the importance of Romans 9–11 in Paul's *magnum opus*, Arnold's dissertation helped to clarify God's plan for Israel, its current national unbelief, the existence of a remnant of Messianic believers in Yeshua in every age, and a glorious future of national salvation.

Our emphasis on Jewish evangelism and discipleship should never change. Our commitment to dispensational hermeneutics and pretribulational, premillennial eschatology should never change. Our fellowship with likeminded evangelical churches and institutions and Messianic congregations should never change, and our avoidance of false teachings and excesses within the church at large or within Messianic movement should never change. We want to hold fast to the faith that was once delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3). Our constituents should always be able to look to Ariel Ministries as a trustworthy source for expository teaching, sound doctrine, and biblical truth. As we steward all that is entrusted to us in the days ahead, we want to hear those precious words from our Master one day: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Mt. 25:23).

Stewarding the Future

Many friends have learned of my opportunity to succeed Dr. Fruchten-



baum as CEO at Ariel Ministries and have said things like, “Those are big shoes to fill.” I have heard it enough that I developed a standard response: “I could never fill his shoes, but I hope to walk faithfully in his steps.” Dr. Fruchtenbaum has a proven track record. He has fought the good fight and has lots of energy and good health to keep doing so for years to come. He has written such helpful works that bless and benefit the Messianic movement and the church at large. He has loved his wife faithfully and beautifully. He has maintained personal integrity and a good name with all who know him. I am happy to ask for the prayers of God’s people that He might enable me to do the same.

I sense God’s calling to this moment in the history of Ariel Ministries because I love Yeshua, our Messiah. I love His Word and the privilege of teaching it faithfully. I love people,

both the lost sheep of the house of Israel and people from all the families of the earth. I love the Messianic movement, where I have had opportunities to serve for the past 35 years. I love our doctrinal statement that carefully reflects what I believe the Bible teaches. And I love what I see happening through our team of dedicated servants who are pouring themselves out in service to our Master. It will be my privilege to serve them. May our Lord glorify Himself through this opportunity to steward His good work at Ariel Ministries.

One of Dr. Fruchtenbaum’s great theological mentors was Dr. David L. Cooper of the Biblical Research Society. Although Dr. Cooper had already had a stroke and could no longer

communicate when Arnold met him, his written works were still a great influence. Dr. Cooper was known for his motto in life, which was often repeated: “God’s will – nothing less, nothing more, nothing else.”² That’s what we desire for Ariel Ministries in this new day and every day.

² Mrs. David L. Cooper, “A Word about the Author: A Modern Gideon and Mrs. Gideon (Revised),” see <https://www.biblicalresearch.info>.



Tim M. Sigler (Ph.D.) serves as the CEO of Ariel Ministries, entrusted by Dr. Fruchtenbaum to lead the organization into its next generation of gospel witness and doctrinal faithfulness. A seasoned practitioner in Messianic Jewish ministry and professor of Hebrew and biblical studies, he hosts educational tours throughout the biblical world with Wisdom Passages and maintains an active international presence as a visiting professor, conference speaker, ministry consultant, and author.



This painting by Jill Kalata is inspired by a photograph taken by Bernice Sigler in 2023, capturing Drs. Fruchtenbaum and Sigler.



The Board's Unanimous Approval

By Jake Hogue

Dr. Fruchtenbaum has been more than just my primary Bible teacher and co-member on the Board of Directors of Ariel Ministries. He is a brother and a friend, and my wife and I consider him an important part of our family.

I have witnessed the progress and growing pains the ministry has faced over the past decades. Arnold's friendship makes the passing of the baton and his legacy as Ariel Ministries' founder of great personal importance to me. The other Board members—Rick Storm, Russell Cruzan, Guy Hoffman, Gary Derechinsky, and Sam Feinberg—also share long-lasting relationships with Arnold, so we, as Board members, have not taken the passing of the CEO position lightly. I am confident that the entire Ariel

Board Chairman
Jake Hogue presenting a piece of art to
Dr. Fruchtenbaum



team wanted us to be extremely careful in selecting Dr. Fruchtenbaum's successor.

The Challenge of Succession

Indeed, the most critical issue a board faces is selecting the successor of a leader, especially when that leader is the founder. As a board, we have been praying for God to raise up a suitable successor for many years, and this need has been part of our strategic plan for as long as we've had one.

Until recently, no one seemed to meet the qualifications we were looking for. We knew that Dr. Fruchtenbaum could never be truly replaced, but we sought a Jewish scholar with

the character, integrity, theological training, and faithful desire to continue leading the ministry when Arnold no longer wished to bear the responsibilities of CEO.

We believe God has answered our prayers by leading us to Dr. Tim Sigler.

How the Decision Unfolded

The Board had been discussing how to better serve our branches and representatives for some time. In response, we developed a position description for a Coordinator of Outreach and Development. Ariel's Director of Publications, Christiane Jurik, a friend of the Siglers, introduced Dr.

Fruchtenbaum to Dr. Sigler during a meal she hosted in her home in January 2023. In March of that year, Arnold invited Dr. Sigler to the Home Office to explore the possibility of him filling the Outreach and Development role. He also invited his Executive Assistant, Cathi Hubbard, and me to assess Dr. Sigler's suitability for the position.

After intensive discussions concerning qualifications, character, integrity, and doctrinal agreement, as well as a few social dinners, it became clear to all of us that Dr. Sigler, if he was willing, would be the best choice to succeed Dr. Fruchtenbaum. As a result, we decided to hire someone else for the Outreach and Development role.

Dr. Sigler's Appointment

The Board, after hearing Dr. Sigler's testimony and reviewing his credentials and experience, approved a one-year training period. This would give Dr. Sigler and his family time to pray, experience the ministry, and discern whether he was truly called to succeed Dr. Fruchtenbaum.

Over the past year, we have all gotten to know Dr. Sigler and his wife, witnessing their enthusiasm for partnering with us in this ministry. The Board of Ariel Ministries is delighted that God has called Dr. Sigler to replace Arnold as Ariel's CEO, and we have unanimously confirmed this decision.

As Dr. Fruchtenbaum will remind you, he is not retiring. He will continue to do what he loves: writing and teaching God's Word from a Messianic Jewish perspective. However, he and the Board are grateful that God has provided another gifted teacher by his side who shares the same vision and desire to continue the ministry's legacy of faithful Bible exposition.

We are confident in God's continued guidance and excited for the future of Ariel Ministries under Dr. Sigler's leadership. The ministry will continue to thrive as we remain committed to our shared mission of teaching and proclaiming God's Word from a Messianic Jewish perspective.



Jesse and Josh Gonzales, Ariel's graphic design team, gifted Dr. Fruchtenbaum with this artwork depicting the fruits of his ministry.



Team Reflections



In September of this year, Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum formally passed the leadership baton of Ariel Ministries to Dr. Tim Sigler. For this joyous occasion, many of our branches and field representatives gathered at the Shoshanah Campus to celebrate and share testimonies about their work. We invited them to reflect on the significance of this leadership transition. The following testimonies illustrate how meaningful this moment was for the entire Ariel team.

The first to send in a report was Johan Jansen van Vuuren from Ariel New Zealand. He wrote:



Matthew Lord and Johan Jansen van Vuuren, Ariel New Zealand

What a *simcha* it was to be with all the Ariel branches and staff at Camp Shoshanah during the Jubilee celebrations! Hearing their reports made me

realize just how diverse and impactful the ministries of the different branches and departments are. Learning about the struggles and limitations faced by other branches helped me see that I am not alone in facing these challenges. Meeting with the Ariel staff and discussing important issues and policies was both crucial and encouraging for advancing our ministry. Witnessing the passing of the leadership baton from Dr. Fruchtenbaum to Dr. Sigler was a true privilege. I am excited to see what the future holds for Ariel under Dr. Sigler's leadership, and we look forward to welcoming him and his wife, Bernice, to New Zealand next year.

Sasha and Lilian Granovsky from Israel approached the challenge to reflect on Jubilee Week by asking what the week may have meant for Dr. Fruchtenbaum.



Lilian and Sasha Granovsky, Ariel Israel

Throughout the week, we witnessed the pure joy and happiness radiating

from Dr. Fruchtenbaum. He *always* wanted to see us at Camp, and it delighted him whenever we could come. This week, seeing us *all* together—chatting, laughing, hugging, and enjoying one another's company—brought him immense joy. He smiled endlessly! That smile of contentment is a memory we will carry with us forever.

It was also remarkable to witness how God has blessed His faithful servant, Arnold, who diligently served Him every single day with joy and pleasure. How fruitful Arnold's life has been! Besides his books, we are also his legacy—his children in the faith. Getting to know the Sigler family more intimately has added to this feeling of family reunion. It was inspiring to witness the love and respect between Dr. Sigler and his wife, Bernice, and the mutual cooperation between parents and children. It's always wonderful to see a family serve together, enjoying one another's company. That speaks volumes. We were truly impressed by what we saw!



Jeffrey Gutterman kept his report short and sweet: "I was fortunate to be able to participate in the 50th Anniversary of Camp Shoshanah via Zoom. It was great to see the majority of the branches together."

Our field representative Jack Nakashima wrote:



Jack and Angi
Nakashima

This week was truly a mountaintop experience for my wife Angi and me! Hearing the many testimonies of God's goodness and His work through Ariel Ministries was both encouraging and uplifting. We were blessed to fellowship with representatives from the ministry's worldwide branches, meeting some for the very first time. Additionally, we couldn't be more pleased with Dr. Fruchtenbaum's foresight in choosing Dr. Sigler as his successor. The entire week was an inspiration to us.



Ivan and Rita Nagy reported from Hungary:



Ivan and Rita Nagy,
Ariel Hungary

Returning to Camp Shoshanah was a high point and true blessing for us. We were able to bring our daughter Noemi with us. Years ago, she began singing at Camp Shoshanah, and during Jubilee Week, we had the joy of performing a beautiful jazz concert for one of the most appreciative audiences. This was an extra blessing on top of all the others!

Chris Savage from Ariel Australia shared:



Chris Savage
presents his work
in Australia.

I stand in reverential awe of what the Lord has accomplished through Ariel Ministries and Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum. Over the past fifty years, count-

less individuals have gone on to serve faithfully in ministry. The recent leadership transition ensures that we can continue for another fifty years—and, God willing, beyond. We have moved from a teacher to a pastor/teacher in Dr. Tim Sigler, and once again, we see the hand of our awesome God in this. I am deeply humbled to be a part of this ministry.

Sharon and Jacques Isaac Gabizon reflected on the touching moment when the baton of leadership was passed to Dr. Sigler:



Jacques Isaac and
Sharon Gabizon,
Ariel Canada

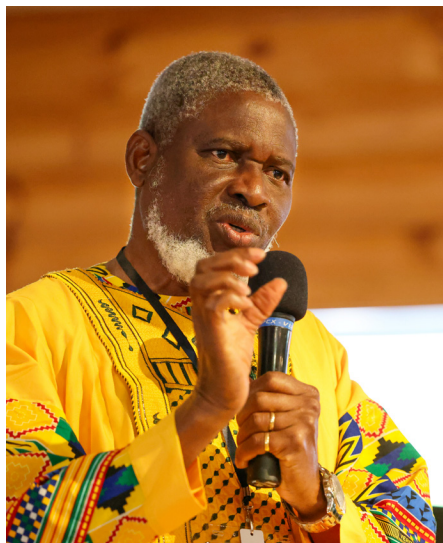
Seeing the familiar faces of old friends from Australia, Israel, America, and beyond often brought tears to our eyes. These are friendships that transcend time, and no number of years can ever erase the bond we share.

The highlight of the week was the Friday Shabbat dinner, where we celebrated not only with a wonderful program and amazing food but also with blessed words of wisdom, heartfelt prayers, and powerful testimonies. The celebration of the CEO transition was particularly meaningful. Dr. Sigler and his beloved family stand as a strong guarantee for continuing Dr. Fruchtenbaum's unique and impactful lega-



cy. His deep love for the Word and his desire to see people grow in their walk with the Lord, as well as in their specific ministries, was a great encouragement to us.

Wion Wleh from Ariel Liberia was equally enthusiastic:



Wion Wleh of Ariel
Liberia

The uniqueness of Ariel Ministries was vividly displayed during the 50th Anniversary Jubilee Celebration at the Shoshanah Campus. Dr. Fruchtenbaum is a true servant of God and a loving father who cares deeply for all his many children around the world, even in countries he has never visited and may never have the chance to visit. He gathered us all around him like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, providing comfort, guidance, and protection.

Dr. Arnold demonstrated what a godly, caring, and loving father could do for his children. He taught us, he fed us spiritually, and he secured our future, as well as the future of the ministry, by introducing Dr. Tim Sigler as the new

CEO of Ariel Ministries. The moment when he laid his hands on Dr. Sigler was deeply meaningful and symbolized the continuity of his legacy. This leadership style of Dr. Fruchtenbaum will remain in our hearts forever.

John Metzger, our field representative from North Carolina, shared the profound impact Dr. Fruchtenbaum's work has had on his life:



John and Sharon
Metzger from North
Carolina

Dr. Fruchtenbaum's teaching completely changed the direction of my life. It is hard to fully express what is in my heart or the deep love I have for Dr. Fruchtenbaum and Camp Shoshanah. It was simply wonderful to spend time with the entire Ariel staff as we gathered in one place for the first time, sharing what the Lord is doing through His faithful servants around the world—all thanks to Dr. Fruchtenbaum's dedication.

I firmly believe that Dr. Sigler is God's chosen leader to take Ariel forward in the coming years. Having listened to his teaching and observed his way of managing people, I am excited to see how perfectly he fits into the path Dr. Fruchtenbaum has walked over the past fifty years. He is, without a doubt, a blessing—someone who will continue to enrich the lives of believers just as Arnold has done all these years, and so, I look forward with great antic-

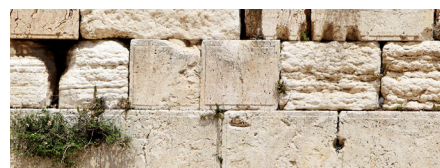
ipation to the future under Dr. Sigler's leadership. May the Lord continue to richly bless Ariel Ministries as we carry on teaching the Scriptures from a Jewish perspective so that His chosen people may hear and believe in Yeshua ha Mashiach.

Jackie Fierman, our missionary in Canada, shared the following thoughts:



Jackie Fierman
presenting her
work

What a blessing it has been to build relationships with team members from around the globe. When I joined about twenty years ago, we had missionaries in only three countries, and now we're in eighteen! It was both enlightening and exciting to learn about the incredible work being done by all the branches. I have always deeply appreciated Dr. Fruchtenbaum's integrity and teachings, and I eagerly look forward to what the Lord has planned through Dr. Sigler, another faithful man of God.



Wayne Wideman, the manager of Ariel's headquarters in Texas, shared these reflections:



Wayne Wideman presenting the work of Ariel's headquarters

During the branch report sessions, I felt a genuine sense of celebrating God's goodness and what He has accomplished through Ariel Ministries. There was a strong spirit of unity as we worked together toward the shared goal of reaching Jewish people with the good news of Messiah. As someone relatively new to Ariel Ministries, I was struck by the tremendous impact this ministry has had on so many lives over the years. It was truly inspiring to witness the fruit of its work firsthand.



Evergreen, our Chinese branch leader, shared these heartfelt thoughts:

It was a joy to reunite with dear old friends and to meet new ones, experiencing the love and fellowship of brothers and sisters at Camp Shoshanah. As I reflect on the past, my heart is filled with gratitude for God's blessings. The time spent studying at Ariel's School of

Messianic Jewish Studies laid a solid foundation that has equipped me to navigate all kinds of theological teachings since then. Dr. Fruchtenbaum's guidance also set the course for my Bible study and teaching for the rest of my life.

May Ariel Ministries continue its legacy under our new leadership. Shalom.

Our Italian branch leaders, Paolo and Martina Speciale, reflected on the unity among God's people:



Paolo and Martina Speciale from Ariel Italy

The Lord truly blessed the Jubilee Week. It was a precious time of fellowship, learning, and joy, a time of sharing and growing together. This week made us realize the vital importance of being both a team and a family, united by our beloved Messiah, Yeshua. We were deeply encouraged to witness the Lord's work in so many different countries.

We prayed together, listened to one another, worshipped the Lord, danced with joy, and embraced each other with love. We are united with the same purpose: to see the light of life, Yeshua, shine wherever we go. No matter the struggles we face, the Lord always finds a way to make everything perfect in His time.

We marveled at how the Lord brought us together to work in unity for the glory of the Father. We rejoiced in what He has accomplished in the past, found renewed strength and courage to face the present, and rediscovered joy for the future that lies ahead.



Jubilee Week

Take a glimpse into the memorable evening when Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum officially passed the baton of leadership to Dr. Tim

Sigler. Captured by Netanya Sigler, these photos reflect the warmth, respect, and shared vision marking this meaningful transition.



Working side by side: Drs. Fruchtenbaum and Sigler



Dr. Sigler during his acceptance speech



Dr. Tim Sigler and his lovely wife Bernice





Dr. Mitch Glaser (top) and Dr. Gregg Hagg (below) of Chosen People Ministries delivered heartfelt speeches, congratulating Drs. Fruchtenbaum and Sigler on this meaningful new season in their lives.



A handshake sealed the deal.

Below: For the first time since its founding, Ariel Ministries brought together its entire staff—including all branches, field representatives, and Board members—at the Shoshanah Campus, uniting as one big family.





Dr. Sigler was especially moved when a painting (see page 13) depicting him and Dr. Fruchtenbaum together at the Wailing Wall was presented.



Right: Dr. Fruchtenbaum's assistants Beryl Hartwig (left) and Leah Cordaro (right)



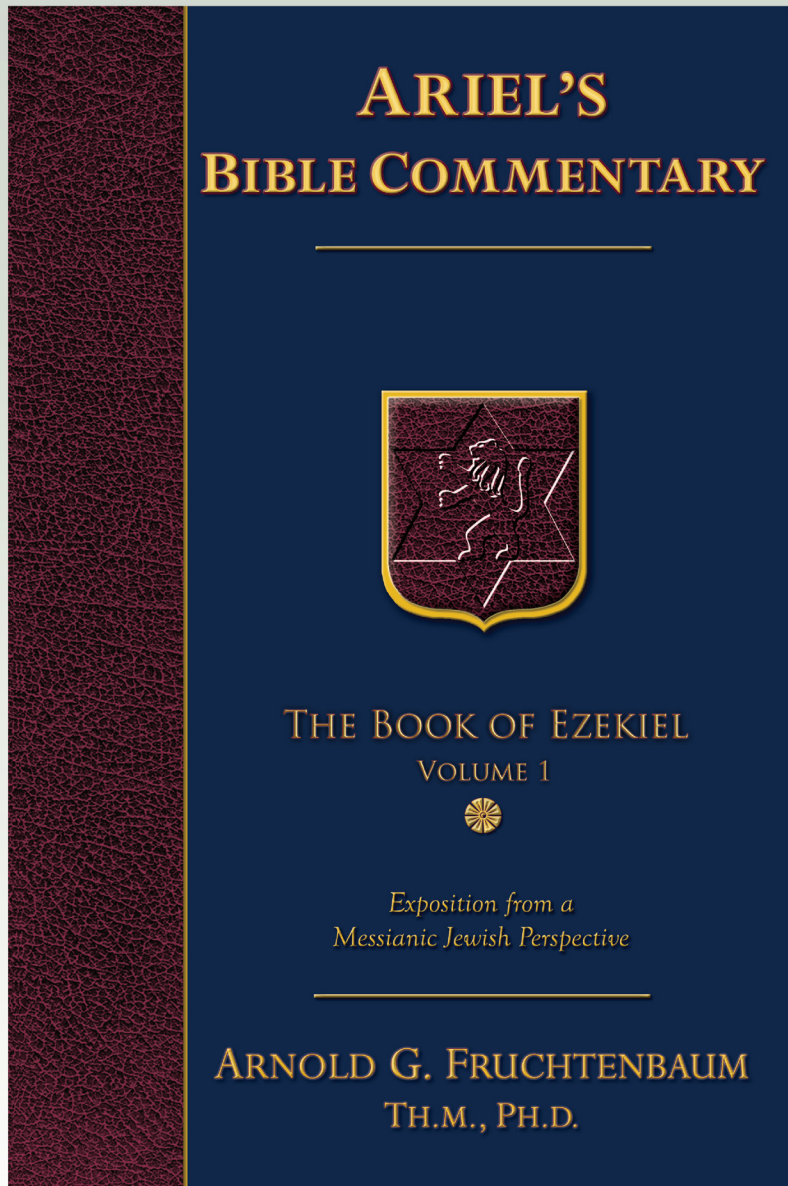
Mottel Baleston (left) and David Tamala (above) were among the gifted musicians who blessed the audience with uplifting Messianic worship music throughout the evening.



Left: Matthew Lord from Ariel New Zealand and Chris Savage from Ariel Australia visited Missy Demers to present a sign that will soon be placed over the pavilion at the Shoshanah Campus. Missy and her husband, Gary, served as camp supervisors for over two decades before passing the baton of leadership to Joe and Cindy Azevedo (right). During the visit, Gary was in the hospital and missed the special moment.



THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL



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“ISRAEL”

INTRODUCTION

One of the major issues of interpretation in the Bible is the meaning of the word *Israel*. The history of the church has often been the record of diminishing the importance of the nation of Israel and the Jewish people. Part of that trend has been to understand the word *Israel* in a nonliteral way. Around eighty years ago, Oswald T. Allis, a brilliant Reformed scholar, wrote clearly about the tension in this matter—a debate still played out among evangelicals between dispensa-

tionalism and covenant theology over the meaning of the term:

Literal interpretation has always been a marked feature of Premillennialism; in Dispensationalism it has been carried to an extreme. We have seen that this literalism found its most thoroughgoing expression in the claim that *Israel must mean Israel*, that it cannot mean the Church...Now if the principle of interpretation is adopted that Isra-

el always means Israel, that it does not mean the Church, then it follows of necessity that practically all of our information regarding the millennium will concern a Jewish or Israelitish age (*italics added*).¹

The study here attempts to show that the term *Israel* interpreted using grammatical-historical interpretation points in some way to the Hebrews, Israelites, or Jewish people.

¹ Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1945), p. 244.

WORD



IN THE BIBLE?

By Dr. Mike Stallard

OLD TESTAMENT USAGE

In the Hebrew Bible, the word for "Israel" appears 2,507 times. There are three different ways that the term is used, although each one refers to Hebrews in some way: (1) a man named Jacob, the grandson of Abraham; (2) the descendants of Jacob, that is, the twelve tribes of Israel; and (3) the ten northern tribes of Israel (sometimes called Ephraim) after the division of the kingdom.

THE MAN NAMED JACOB

The name *Israel* first appears in Genesis 32:28. Before the reconciliation between Esau and Jacob in the first part of the chapter 33, Jacob wrestles with a man at night (32:24). In the end, he recognizes that he has wrestled with God (v. 30). During this struggle, God gives Jacob a new name: "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed" (v. 28). The name *Israel* means either "He strives/fights with God" or "God fights." The context better supports the first possibility since God tells Jacob that he fought with God. This wrestling with God highlights the close relationship between Jacob and God, foreshadowing the ongoing closeness between God and the nation of Israel in the days ahead. The history that started with Abraham continues through his grandson Jacob, now known as Israel.

The word *Israel* also refers to the new name of Jacob in Old Testament

GENERAL BIBLE STATISTICS

The word *Israel* appears 2,583 times in the entire Bible.² There are a few terms that appear more often in the Scriptures, as the table shows.

Interestingly, the word *church* occurs only 112 times. This does not

mean that the church is far less important than Israel. They are of equal significance in God's plan. The numbers, however, stress the significance of Israel as a term to take seriously in its own right.

Word	Number of Occurrences
LORD/Lord	7,918
God	4,646
People or Peoples	3,858
Israel	2,583
Man	2,294

² English Bible numbers use NASB95.



ISRAEL

passages that mention the *sons of Israel* (645 times) or the *tribes of Israel* (52 times). In fact, the phrase *sons of Jacob* equates to the *sons of Israel* in Genesis 49:2: "Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob; and listen to Israel your father." What follows is a list of Israel's sons with pronounced blessings. A summary is given later in the chapter using the term *tribes* instead of *sons*: "All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them" (v. 28). In this way, Jacob's new name *Israel* is attached to his progeny, who over time will collectively be called by that same name.

THE DESCENDANTS OF JACOB

The descendants of Jacob or Israel become a rather large family as the years progress. Following the period of slavery in Egypt, God delivers the people in the Exodus. That family commences to function as a nation or, in modern parlance, a nation-state under the leadership of Moses. In addition, the "congregation of the sons of Israel" (Ex. 35:20) begins to be

called *Israelites* (Ex. 35:29), thereby showing the connection to the name of their ancestor Jacob. Near the end of the wilderness experience for the Israelites, it was common for the name *Israel* to refer to the entire nation or family of the descendants of Jacob.³ Deuteronomy 5:1 says, "Then Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: 'Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I am speaking today in your hearing.'" That is quickly followed by one of the most famous verses in the Old Testament: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the LORD is one!" (Deut. 6:4). In this context, the appeal to the word *Israel* clearly means the whole nation as a people (see also Deut. 9:1; 20:3).

Israel as a moniker for the descendants of Jacob also naturally continues in the prophets. The prophet Amos provides an important example. After a book full of pronouncements against the sins of mostly the northern ten tribes, the prophet looks to the end time days when God would unite the divided kingdom (Amos 9:11-15). When describing this great day, God, through the prophet, predicts, "Also I will restore the captivity of My people

Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them" (v. 14). In this verse, the term *Israel* refers not merely to Jacob but to the entire group of Israelites or descendants of Jacob. In other words, the promise is to the people as a nation. What is exciting about this last section in the book of Amos is the final and certain promise: "'I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them,' says the LORD your God" (v. 15). As a people group, as a nation, Israel—the descendants of Jacob—will possess their land permanently. Thus, there is a future for the nation, which we can biblically call *Israel*.

THE TEN NORTHERN TRIBES OF ISRAEL

After the death of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel is split in two. The southern half covers the territory and people of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Due to the overwhelming superiority in territorial size and numbers of people, the southern nation carries the name of Judah. Judah also has an attachment to King Da-

³ There are always a few exceptions, such as Rahab and Ruth, who were not physical descendants of Jacob but joined the family or nation of Israel. In addition, there were proselytes who, from one vantage point, were part of the nation as well. Although the centurion may be a proselyte to Judaism, Yeshua appears to consider him, in this passage, to be outside of Israel.



vid, who was from that tribe. The initial leader of the southern kingdom of Judah is Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. The kingdom made up of the ten northern tribes keeps the name of the entire kingdom before it is divided: Israel. The leader of this northern kingdom is Jeroboam, son of Nebat.

This breakup of the nation of Israel is recorded poignantly in 1 Kings 12:16: "When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, 'What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!'" The king who would not listen was Rehoboam. As a result of the king's harshness, the people of the northern tribes reject the house of David, who was the son of Jesse from the tribe of Judah, from ruling over them. Interestingly, they keep the name *Israel*, as evidenced by the cry, "To your tents, O Israel!" The southern kingdom begins to be called *Judah* after David's tribe.

Later on, the hardening of these names of the northern and southern kingdoms as Israel and Judah is part of the historical information in the He-

brew Bible. For example, 2 Chronicles 25:21-22 records, "So Joash king of Israel went up, and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced each other at Beth-Shemesh, which belonged to Judah. Judah was defeated by Israel, and they fled each to his tent."

The book of Amos (755 B.C.) reinforces this use of Israel and Judah as the names of the northern and southern kingdoms, respectively. In Amos 1:3-2:3, God announces judgment on the sins of Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab. He then speaks against Judah in 2:4-5. The southern kingdom is certainly in view, as even Jerusalem, now the capital of Judah and former capital of the entire nation, is mentioned (v. 5). Finally, God, through the prophet, zeroes in mostly on the transgressions and punishments of Israel, starting at 2:6 and going all the way to 9:10. It is clear that Israel is the name for the kingdom containing the ten northern tribes, which come from Jacob. This labeling of the two kingdoms is not surprising since the book of Amos opens by telling us that its prophecies were given when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam, the son of

Joash, was king of Israel.

Thus, the word *Israel* is used in three different ways in the Old Testament: the man Jacob who was given the new name of Israel, the descendants of Jacob (nation or family of Israel), and the northern ten tribes after the division of the kingdom. There is one thread that unifies this diverse usage. In every case, the term is referring to Hebrews, starting with Jacob. It does not describe a spiritual reality of individual redemption, although the hope was always that the individuals involved and so named would seek the Lord and know Him personally.

NEW TESTAMENT USAGE

The Greek word for *Israel* occurs in the New Testament sixty-eight times. In addition, the Greek term for *Israelite* appears nine times (Jn. 1:47; Acts 2:22, 3:12, 5:35, 13:16, 21:28; Rom. 9:4, 11:1; 2 Cor. 11:22).

The usage of the word *Israel* in the New Testament is similar to that in the Hebrew Bible, with one difference. The use of *Israel* to mean just the northern ten tribes appears infrequently and is not emphasized. This

ISRAEL

does not mean that the New Testament adopts any fallacious theory about the "ten lost tribes," as will become clear below.

The New Testament uses the term *Israel* as a name for Jacob, as a designation for the descendants of Jacob (all twelve tribes as a people or nation), and as a way to speak of the northern ten tribes.

THE MAN NAMED JACOB

The New Testament at times uses the designation *Israel* to mean the individual man named Jacob, the son of Isaac. A few examples illustrate the point. First, in Matthew 19:28, Yeshua uses the phrase "twelve tribes of Israel." In that statement, Israel signifies Jacob the individual. Likewise, in Luke 1:16, there is an angelic prediction that John the Baptist "will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the

Lord their God." In Stephen's sermon in Acts 7, Israel as Jacob is used twice in referencing the "sons of Israel" (vv. 23, 37). John's vision in the Apocalypse provides other examples. The apostle hears the number 144,000 or 12,000 individuals from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 7:4-8). Objections based upon the absence of the tribe of Dan from the list and the addition of Manasseh, the grandson of Jacob, instead, should be rejected. There is no reason whatsoever, following grammatical-historical interpretation, to take this list in a nonliteral way. Israel in 7:4 refers to Jacob the man, while the details cite eleven of his sons and one grandson. Taking the text in a straightforward way makes perfect sense in the context. The book of Revelation describes an eternal state in which a beautiful New Jerusalem comes out of heaven to the new earth. The twelve gates

around the city have the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel written on them, although the sons are not named (Rev. 21:12). In this last use of the word *Israel* in the Bible, the meaning is clearly the individual man Jacob, whose name is also Israel.

DESCENDANTS OF JACOB, THE TWELVE TRIBES

At the outset, it is important to point out that the New Testament uses the term *Israel* to refer to *all* twelve tribes. It is a false understanding to believe that the northern tribes, who were taken into captivity by Assyria around 722 B.C., were somehow lost to history or ceased to exist after that time. We cannot limit the New Testament usage of Israel to only the southern kingdom (Judah and Benjamin). First, the Old Testament historical records demonstrate that there were Israelites from the northern tribes in the land after the Assyrian conquest of Israel. In 2 Chronicles 30:1, King Hezekiah of Judah (d. 687 B.C.) sends letters to those from northern tribes inviting them to Jerusalem for Passover. In the following discussion, those from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, Zebulun, and Asher are specifically mentioned (2 Chron. 30:10-11). Later in history, Josiah (d. 609 B.C.) received offerings from the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim as well as from the southern kingdom (2 Chron. 34:9).

In addition, the New Testament mentions several times that there are still twelve tribes. In Matthew 19:28, Yeshua affirms that the twelve apostles would "sit upon twelve thrones,



judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Furthermore, Paul defends himself before King Agrippa with these words: "And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day" (Acts 26:6-7). Thus, both Yeshua and Paul saw the present reality of all twelve tribes as well as a future prospect for the people of Israel. One entire New Testament book is written "to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad" (Jas. 1:1). In Revelation 21:12, God's future eternal state mentions the twelve tribes. In light of these affirmations, the interpreter should not limit the New Testament understanding of the number of tribes constituting its use of the term *Israel*.

Other instances in the New Testament illustrate the pattern of using the word *Israel* to refer to the twelve tribes, that is, the whole nation of Israel. When the centurion begs for Yeshua to heal his servant at a distance, Messiah says to the crowd, "I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel" (Mt. 8:10). *Israel* can only mean the entire nation, who are descendants of Jacob.³ After His crucifixion and resurrection, Yeshua walks with two disciples on the way to Emmaus. Unaware that they were talking to the risen Messiah, one of them says, "We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel" (Lk. 24:21). Again, Israel refers to the descendants of Jacob who compose the nation. Then, after Yeshua teaches the disciples that a baptism of the Spirit is coming soon, they ask Him, "Lord, is it at this time

You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Only the entire nation of twelve tribes makes sense of the word *Israel* in their question. In the epistles, one prominent example is Romans 11:26. Paul points ahead to the time when the entire people of Israel (all of the Hebrew people) will be saved. Interestingly, he supports his statement by quoting Isaiah 59:20, where the word *Jacob* is used also as a name for the entire nation.

THE TEN NORTHERN TRIBES OF ISRAEL

One New Testament passage differentiates between the northern and southern kingdoms. Hebrews 8:8 begins a quotation from Jeremiah 31:31-34: "Behold, days are coming, says the LORD, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." Here, the word *Israel* points to the northern ten tribes in contrast to the southern kingdom of Judah. The promise of a future new covenant for both of the kingdoms together is envisioned but not as separate events. Later in the passage (both in Jeremiah and in Hebrews), the text says, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel." Judah is not mentioned. This is most likely a reference that covers Judah nonetheless so that the entire nation is included.

In the first century, sorting out the political boundaries complicated the analysis of Jewish sections in the empire. Judah was a particular province of Rome, Pontius Pilate being its most famous governor. However, Perea and Galilee were also distinct





political territories where Jewish people lived. Most of the Jews thought in terms of the genetic family coming from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That was Israel to them.

SPECIAL ISSUES

Two major New Testament passages are often interpreted in such a way that the word *Israel* actually includes Gentiles in a spiritual way. Israel, in this view, becomes a designation relative to spiritual salvation. It refers to those who know the Lord and not in some way to ethnic people like Jacob and his progeny. It is spiritual Israel and not physical Israel. This misinterpretation must be addressed.

ROMANS 9:6

In Romans 9–11, the Apostle Paul defends the truth that God has not forsaken Israel, although the nation is in unbelief for a time. Their unbelief is not a failure on God's part: "But it is not as though the word of God has failed" (Rom. 9:6). But then he adds, "For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." There are two main views of the last statement.

1. The declaration speaks of Gentiles being part of Israel (or the new Israel) so that the distinction between Israel and the church is done away. So, the church is spiritual Israel. Consequently, the word Israel is turned into a salvation term and not an ethnic term.
2. The second view is that not all Jewish people (Israel) are

saved. There are two kinds of people in view in the verse: Jews who have faith in Messiah Yeshua and those who do not. In essence, Jewish people must do more than be Jewish to be saved.

There are several reasons why the second option is the better interpretation of Paul's words. First, the primary intent of the entire section of Romans 9–11 is to explain the current situation of Israel and its future hope in Messiah. The second interpretation better fits this larger context. Second, this view also better fits the preceding context. In Romans 9:1-5, the focus is entirely on physical Israel and the blessings that it possesses. Third, the second view actually expresses the statement of the following context in 9:7-8: "nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants." Fourth, this view harmonizes well with the illustrations of Isaac and Jacob given in 9:7-13. Isaac and Jacob were sons of promise and not just physical sons in God's plan. They were both physical and spiritual sons. Likewise, the Jewish people must come to God via the promise through the Messiah and not because of their genetic makeup. Paul wants his kinsmen to come to God through Jesus. In 9:6, he is not envisioning Gentiles in the discussion. Therefore, there is no basis in this verse for speaking of the Church as the new Israel.

GALATIANS 6:16

In Galatians, the apostle Paul scolds believers, especially Messianic Jews,

who insist that one must be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses to continue in the Christian faith. At stake was the gospel of eternal life through faith in Yeshua (Gal. 1:6-10). Toward the end of the book, the author summarizes his point: "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (6:15). Then he adds in the next verse, "And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God." As with Romans 9:6, there are two main positions on the meaning of "Israel of God."

1. The "Israel of God" refers to the church, the new creation of verse 15. The Greek word for *and* before "upon the Israel of God" means *even*. The blessing would be for the church, *even the Israel of God*. This helps support the idea that the church equals Israel. There is only one category of people in the verse.
2. The "Israel of God" refers to Jewish believers. The word *and* is emphatic, taking on the usual meaning of *and*. The blessing would be for the church and also includes the Jewish believers in the church. The passage does not equate Israel and the church. There are two categories of people in the passage.

There are three reasons that the second interpretation is the better choice. First, the preposition "upon" is repeated for both groups, those who follow this rule and the Israel of God, implying that there are two cat-

egories of people. Second, all other references to Israel in the New Testament refer to Hebrew people in some way. Third, it makes sense for Paul, after a blistering attack on Judaizers throughout the book, to remind his readers that the blessing applies to those Jewish people who have come to Messiah by faith. They should not reject these brothers due to the controversy. Consequently, this verse does not support the idea that there is no distinction between Israel and the church.

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CONCLUSION

Why do our theological opponents reject seeing the name *Israel* as referring to Jewishness in some way? For some, it could be creedal theology, that is, an inherited tradition that must be upheld. This sometimes leads to New Testament priority in interpreting the Old Testament. It is a kind of "church over Israel" approach that contradicts the spirit of Romans 9–11. The next step is the need to interpret the promises, especially land and national promises, in an allegorical way rather than a grammatical-historical way. In the end, Israel is wrested from its true meaning. Israel means Isra-

el the man or the descendants who have come from him. God has a plan for this people that will not be denied.



Dr. Mike Stallard is the Vice President of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. He has earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama Huntsville, Master of Divinity from Liberty Baptist Seminary, and his Master of Sacred Theology and Doctor of Philosophy from Dallas Theological Seminary.



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THAT TIME THE TALMUD
TAUGHT THAT THE
ANGEL OF THE LORD WAS
THE GOD OF ISRAEL

By Matthew Bryce Ervin, MA, MTS



If you're like me, then you enjoy learning new things. I especially enjoy discovering something that I didn't know existed before.

This is even more exciting when it relates to a topic I've studied in depth. Recently, I had such an experience. While working on a new project, I came across a passage in the Talmud that I had previously overlooked. It concerns the identity of the rider on the red horse in Zechariah 1:8.

As a reminder, here is that verse:

"I saw at night, and behold, a man was riding on a red horse, and he was standing among the myrtle trees which were in the ravine, with red, sorrel and white horses behind him" (Zech. 1:8, NASB1995).

And now, here is the passage from the Talmud. I hope it intrigues you as much as it did me:

Rabbi Yoḥanan says: What is the meaning of that which is written: "I saw the night, and behold, a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle bushes that were in the depths" (Zechariah 1:8)? What is the meaning of the phrase "I saw the night"? The Holy One, Blessed be He, sought to transform the entire world into night and destroy it, as there were no righteous people. "And behold, a man riding"; the word "man" is referring to no one but the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it is stated: "The Lord is a man of war, The Lord is His name" (Exodus 15:3).¹

The rider on the red horse in Zechariah 1:8 is called a "man" because he looked like one. Three verses later, in Zechariah 1:11, the rider is revealed to be none other than *the Angel of the LORD* or the *Yahweh-Messenger* (מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה, *Malak YHWH*). Rabbi Yohanan identified this "man" as the "Holy One" and connected him to the "LORD" from Exodus 15:3, who is Yahweh.² This means that Yohan-

an believed the Angel of the Lord, at least in Zechariah 1, was somehow Yahweh Himself.

This is certainly a powerful concept for all followers of Yeshua, as it aligns with the common Christian belief that the Angel of the Lord in various passages of the Old Testament is the preincarnate Son of God. A brief perusal of some classic commentaries makes this plain.

For example, the *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* explains that the rider is "Jehovah, the second person of the Trinity, manifested in *man's* form, an earnest [foreshadow] of the incarnation."³ We cannot get into all of the reasons why this is true here.⁴ Suffice it to say that the Angel of the Lord is often presented as both a *messenger of Yahweh* and as *Yahweh Himself*. He is also seen, while God the Father has never been seen (Jn. 1:18; 6:46).

Now, this isn't to suggest that the Talmud supports the doctrine of the Trinity or the idea that the eternal Son of God appeared in the Hebrew Bible. However, this passage from the Talmud does demonstrate that the belief in the Angel of the Lord being Yahweh was not limited to followers of Messiah in the second and third centuries A.D.

¹ b. *Sanhedrin* 93a. All subsequent quotations from the Babylonian Talmud are taken from *The William Davidson Talmud*, translated by Rabbi Adin E. Steinsaltz, Sefaria, 2024. Available at <https://www.sefaria.org/texts/Talmud>.

² *Yahweh* is a form of the *Tetragrammaton*, the four letters of God's holy name, which are transliterated from the Hebrew as *YHWH* or *YHVH*. Because there are no vowels in the name and because it has long been regarded by the Jews as too sacred to be spoken, the correct pronunciation is uncertain. Most modern scholars prefer *Yahweh*, while others favor *Yehovah* (or the Latinized *Jehovah*). English Bibles typically render the four letters as "LORD" (in all capital letters).

³ Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary: Critical, Practical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Toledo, OH: Jerome B Names & Co., 1884), 2: Zech 1:18.

⁴ I cover the subject in detail in my book, *The Divine Messenger: Appearances of the Son of God in the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2023).



Other Rabbinic Authorities

Rabbi Yohanan (or Johanan) bar Nappaha (A.D. 180–279) was one of the most prominent rabbis in the early formation of the Talmud. His teachings and opinions appear thousands of times in both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds. Importantly, Yohanan's teachings were representative of the views held by many other rabbis and scholars in his day. The point is that the idea that the Angel of the Lord was Yahweh wasn't unique to him alone.

Even a millennium later, another renowned rabbi, David Kimchi (alternatively *Kimhi*, also known by the acronym *RaDaK*) supported this view. Kimchi (1160–1235), a respected medieval biblical commentator and grammarian, favorably referenced this Talmud passage in his commentary on Zechariah. Rev. Alexander McCaul, the Christian translator of Kimchi's commentary, was particularly struck by this. In a footnote, he wrote: "This is a remarkable testimony to the belief of the ancient Jews, that He, who appeared in the form of a man, as the angel of the Lord, was the God of Israel."⁵

My response to the passage mirrors McCaul's, as it provides *proof* that ancient Jews interpreted the Angel of the Lord in a way that harmonizes with Christian interpretations. This fact isn't widely recognized today because another view from the

Talmudic period eventually became the dominant one. Over time, rabbinic tradition developed the view that the Angel of the Lord was an exalted, but still created, angelic being. He is especially identified as Metatron, the highest of all angels in rabbinic literature (e.g., *3 Enoch* 12:5; *b. Sanhedrin* 38b).⁶ This shift was at least partly an effort to distance rabbinical Jewish teaching from interpretations that could be seen as supporting Trinitarianism.

The Defender of Israel

Our Talmudic passage above ends with the following statement: "Upon a red horse" alludes to the fact that the Holy One, Blessed be He, sought to transform the whole world into blood."⁷ This reinforces the portrayal of the man on the horse as Yahweh, prepared to fight against Israel's enemies.

Rabbi Yohanan's reason for the horse's color is also shared by many Christian interpreters. The red color of the Angel of the Lord's horse has historically been understood to symbolize war and bloodshed,⁸ as is the case with the red horse taking peace from the earth in Revelation 6:4. Zechariah's vision concerns the actions that the Lord would take to restore Jerusalem as a prominent city (Zech. 1:16-17). It is possible that this vision also foreshadows the day when the Lord Yeshua will personally defeat Is-

rael's enemies. When He returns, He will be riding another horse—a white one—and his robes will be drenched in blood (Rev. 19:13). That blood, however, will not be His own but that of Israel's slain enemies (Isa. 63:1-6; cf. Zech. 14:3; Rev. 16:16; 19:15-21).

The Angel of the Lord appears twice in Zechariah's eight night visions—once in the first vision and again in the fourth. His appearance in the fourth vision (Zech. 3) is among the most impactful for the Christian reader, as it offers a powerful picture of the imputed righteousness of the Messiah being placed on the sinner. Understanding the identity of the Angel of the Lord in Zechariah 1 deepens our appreciation of His role as the Redeemer in Zechariah 3.

It is of special interest that, during a period when rabbinic traditions were still being developed, a Jewish sage sat down, opened the text, read about the Angel of the Lord, and couldn't help but conclude that He was the God of Israel!



Matthew Bryce Ervin, MA, MTS, is lead pastor at Oakfield-Alabama Baptist Church in Oakfield, New York.

He serves as an advising professor for Tyndale Theological Seminary and is the director of Apple Eye, a Bible-teaching ministry. He has a wife and two sons.

⁵ Footnote #2, in David Kimchi, *Rabbi David Kimchi's Commentary Upon the Prophecies of Zechariah*, translated by Alexander McCaul (London: James Duncan, 1837), p. 3.

⁶ The meaning of the name *Metatron* is unclear, although some argue that it means "behind the throne" while others say that it means "arranger," "divider," or "representative." Some see importance in the name being numerically equivalent to God's name *Shaddai* (typically translated as "Almighty") in Hebrew Gematria (the alphanumeric code by which letters correspond to numbers).

⁷ *b. Sanhedrin* 93a.

⁸ I personally believe that the colors of all four horses in the vision correspond to the colors of the flowers of a myrtle tree. I admit, this is a minority view.

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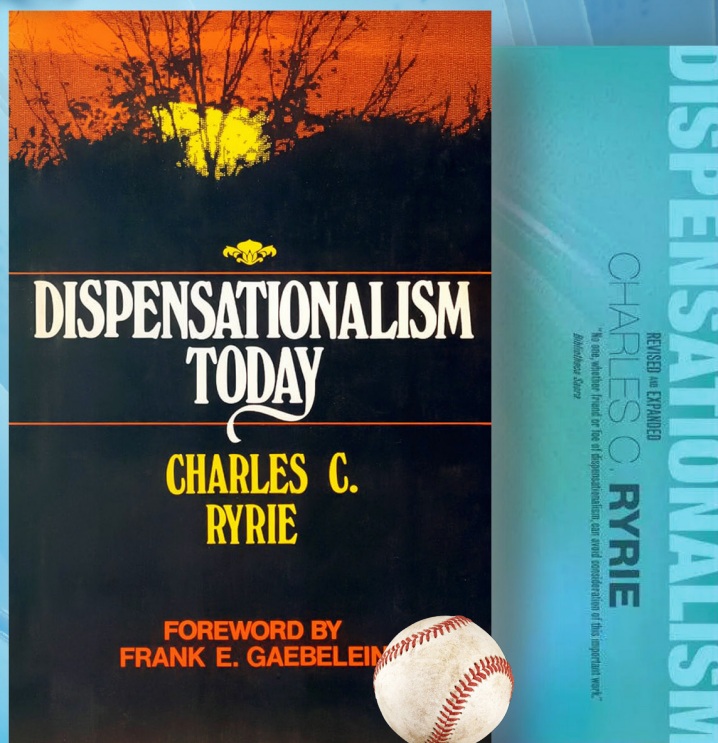
Ryrie's Three-Legged Stool

By J. Morgan Arnold

Introduction

Baseball historians refer to the period in the game from 1901 to 1919 as the “Deadball Era.” During that time, baseballs were spongier, games averaged only 3.4 runs per game, and very few home runs were hit. Then, in 1919, a monumental shift instigated by “The Babe” forever altered the game. Babe Ruth revolutionized baseball by hitting 29 home runs that year. Fans were captivated by his massive uppercut and his “swing-for-the-fences” approach. In response, Major League Baseball made changes to the game the following year. Baseballs were wound tighter. Outfield fences were moved in closer. As a result, 40% more runs were generated in 1921 versus 1918, and four times as many home runs were hit. Ruth himself hit 59 homers that year! The basics of the game remained the same, but Ruth’s influence had transformed “America’s national pastime” into a more dynamic game.

During that same period, on the theological basepaths, men like Cyrus Scofield, Arno Gaebele, Lewis Sperry Chafer, and others were sewing the fabric and raising the flag of dispensationalism to higher heights. The banner spread across nations and continents. Years later, in 1965, a game-changing event took place. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, a man bearing little physical resemblance to Babe Ruth, stepped up to the plate and hit it out of the park with his monumental book *Dispensationalism Today*.





With it, Ryrie sought to mend the tatters that had developed from his camp's theological inconsistencies and from opponents' thoughtless mischaracterizations. He resolutely planted the flag in the ground by academically defining and biblically defending what he considered to be the essence of dispensationalism. He boldly asked, "What must someone believe to be a dispensationalist?"

Ryrie's threefold answer has come to be known as the *sine qua non* (Latin for "without which, not") of dispensationalism. These dispensational indispensables can be summarized as (1) a distinction between Israel and the church, (2) interpreting the Bible using a consistent literal (or plain) grammatical-historical system of hermeneutics in *all areas* of biblical interpretation, and (3) the underlying purpose of God in the world being the glory of God.¹

These ingredients may not necessarily be *exclusive* to dispensationalism. However, Ryrie contended that they are *essential* for dispensationalism's validity and functionality:

The essence of Dispensationalism, then, is the distinction between Israel and the church. This grows out of the Dispensationalist's consistent employment of normal or plain or historical-grammatical interpretation, and it reflects an understanding of the basic purpose of God in all His dealings with mankind as that of

glorifying Himself through salvation and other purposes as well.²

Because of their symbiotic nature, Ryrie's *sine qua non* serves as a sort of "three-legged stool" for dispensationalism. As a result, proponents have a supported and stable system.

However, hatchet-bearing theologians have tried to chop off the stool's legs for many years. They claim that dispensationalism has but one *sine qua non*: the Israel-church distinction. Specific desires for such dismantling vary. Non-normative dispensationalists, such as progressive dispensationalists, aspire to chop off a leg or two so that the eaves of the dispensational tent can drape over the bridge they are trying to build between dispensationalism and covenantalism. Non-dispensationalists would love to see Ryrie's three-legged stool completely chopped up for firewood.

So, it prompts the question: Can dispensationalism survive as a functional theological system with only one or two of the "legs," or are all three essentials indispensable? Most theologians, dispensational and non-dispensational, consent that the Israel-church distinction *is* a dispensational distinctive.³ Dispensationalist Arnold Fruchtenbaum confirms, "Israelology is the main distinguishing characteristic between dispensationalism and covenant theology."⁴ Thus, this article will focus its attention on Ryrie's other two essentials to determine if they deserve a seat (or a stool)

at the table. Afterwards, additional *sine qua nons* proposed by other dispensationalists will be observed to discern whether they, too, could be affixed as legs or leg supports to Ryrie's three-legged stool.

Dispensational Indispensable: A Consistent Literal Grammatical-Historical Hermeneutic

Hermeneutics is defined as "the science and art of interpretation." Dispensationalists approach God's Word by interpreting it at face value by using what has come to be known as the literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutical method (henceforth abbreviated *LGH*). Dispensationalist Ron Bigalke explains, "The interpreter must give heed to the context of a given passage, to the culture and history of each biblical book, to figures of speech, to grammar, and to the normal meaning of words."⁵ A word, phrase, or passage is to be contextually interpreted by its *plain* or *normal meaning* according to the biblical author's original intent. This means a passage has only a *single meaning* or, as the old inductive study adage states, "Interpretation is one, application is many." Also, while other theologians may use the LGH system to interpret certain sections of the Bible, dispensationalists should apply LGH *consistently* across every page, OT

¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody, 1965), p. 43ff, and *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody, 2007), pp. 45-48.

² Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, p. 48.

³ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 1989), pp. 7-8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵ Ron J. Bigalke, "What is Grammatical-Historical Hermeneutics?" in *What is Dispensationalism?*, ed. Paul Miles (Wynnewood, OK: Grace Abroad Ministries, 2018), p. 49.



and NT, and invariably with both prophetic and nonprophetic passages.

To illustrate, imagine if the love of your life wrote you a love letter (or a “love e-mail” these days). You would pore over every word and sentence to glean every ounce of intended emotion and meaning. Knowing your lover to be faithful and true, you would not waste time trying to discern hidden meanings or secret codes that could cause you to read something unintended and inconsequential into the words. So, why do many theologians waste time unnecessarily spiritualizing God’s Word, fabricating fanciful meanings unintended by *our* Bridegroom, the One who is faithful and true (Rev. 19:11b)?

Ryrie argues, “If God is the originator of language and if the chief purpose of originating it was to convey His message to humanity... it must also follow that He would use language and expect people to understand it in its literal, normal, and plain sense.”⁶ OT prophets expected their prophecies to be fulfilled literally, not figuratively. Yeshua interpreted the OT Scriptures literally, not figuratively. The disciples expected Yeshua to restore the kingdom to Israel literally (Acts 1:6). Then, after watching Him ascend visibly and bodily to heaven, they were told by “men in white” that He would literally return *just the same way* He went into heaven (Acts 1:9-11). So, why would the apostles even entertain the thought that He might figuratively return invisibly or spiritually?

Bible students and theologians choosing *not* to employ a consistent LGH hermeneutic can fall into the trap of “buffet line exegesis,” picking and choosing how to interpret the Bible according to their presuppositions and theological systems. Dispensationalist Warren Wiersbe rightly explains, “Once we are permitted to make such plain words as ‘Israel’ and ‘Judah’ mean something else, there is no end to how we might interpret the Bible!”⁷ It is because of a consistent LGH hermeneutic that dispensationalists literally believe in a future rapture of the church (1 Thess. 4:13-18), in God’s future fulfillment of all His unconditional covenants with the nation of Israel, and in a future rule of Yeshua over His Messianic Kingdom while seated on David’s literal throne in a literal Jerusalem (Ps. 132:11-13, 17) for a literal thousand years (Rev. 20:1-8).

However, some who wear the dispensationalist label have strayed away from the LGH method and even claim it should not be included as a *sine qua non*. One of these theological camps is progressive dispensationalism (henceforth abbreviated PD). Birthed in the 1980s, PD is the brainchild fathered by Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock of Dallas Seminary and Robert Saucy of Talbot Seminary. PD attempts to formulate a mediating position between dispensationalism and covenantalism. However, in its desperate quest to *bridge* the chasm between these two disparate theological systems, PD has instead become

a *barge* that has progressively drifted away from the shores of dispensationalism. This is evidenced by its spurning of the consistent LGH hermeneutic. Dispensationalist Patrick Belvill explains:

[T]he founders of Progressive Dispensationalism determined that they could not achieve their theological perspective by adhering to the literal, grammatical, historical method of biblical interpretation (as revealed in the Bible), so they created their own method of interpretation known as the “complementary hermeneutic”... A new construct has to be created in order to conform Scripture to a preconceived program of thought.⁸

Progressive dispensationalists must use their *complementary hermeneutic* alongside a literal hermeneutic to interpret New Testament (NT) passages in a way that makes supplemental changes to Old Testament (OT) promises. This “hermeneutical add-on” allows them to claim that the church partially fulfilled some of God’s promises to Israel in an “already/not yet” narrative. Thus, as Ryrie put it, they teach “that Christ is already reigning in heaven on the throne of David, thus merging the church with a present phase of the already inaugurated Davidic covenant and kingdom.”⁹ Their *Kingdom Now* emphasis (which coincides with a deemphasis on the rapture and the future kingdom) requires them to spiritualize passages that should be interpreted as literal. This is

⁶ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, p. 92.

⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2 Vols. (Wheaton: Scripture Press Publications, Victor Books, 1989), 2:306.

⁸ Patrick Belvill, “What is the Bible About?” in Paul Miles, ed., *What is Dispensationalism?* (Wynnewood, OK: Grace Abroad Ministries, 2018), p. 137.

a clear violation of the LGH exegetical principles.

PD founder Blaising openly admitted their LGH abandonment: "As evangelicals have worked together exploring these developments, the old divisions of spiritual versus literal interpretation have been *left behind* [emphasis added]."¹⁰ Interesting choice of words!

To use another baseball analogy, what if Major League Baseball, as a result of seeing the growing popularity of football in America, decided that baseball needed to be more like football? Would the sport still be considered *baseball*? Baseball purists would cry foul if baserunners could use blockers to help them advance on the basepaths or if pitchers were removed from the game and batters could kick a baseball over the center field wall for three runs. Likewise, how far does a self-proclaimed dispensationalist have to move away from Ryrie's foundational essentials before he is no longer considered a pure or true dispensationalist? Can a "one-pointer" still be a dispensationalist?

Christopher Cone, a dispensationalist, agrees with Ryrie:

Because of the hermeneutic departure, I do not see progressive dispensationalism as akin to traditional dispensationalism, per se – I agree with Ryrie's assessment

that the system more resembles covenant premillennialism.¹¹

Without a consistent LGH hermeneutic, dispensationalism is not dispensationalism. Dispensationalist Earl Radmacher posited that "literal interpretation is the 'bottom-line' of dispensationalism."¹² Since we communicate to God using *plain* language in our prayers, then why wouldn't God communicate to us in like manner through His Word?

Dispensational Indispensable: A Doxological Unifying Principle

A consistent, literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutic applied to the whole of Scripture should provide the Bible student with an understanding that God's chief purpose in all of His creation is *doxological*. In other words, everything God does brings glory to Himself, and everything we say and do should bring glory to God through Messiah Yeshua (1 Pet. 4:11). Dispensationalist Douglas Brown agrees that "the glory of God is the overarching purpose of God... His glory is intrinsic to His essence, and it is the first and last cause of why God created the world. God has progressively revealed and expressed His glory throughout each dispensation. The

ultimate end of all humanity is to glorify God by recognizing and reflecting His glory."¹³

Conversely, covenant theology sees God's central theme as being the salvation of mankind. Progressive dispensationalists and progressive covenantalists have adopted a Christocentric focus whereby everything in the OT and NT somehow points to the Messiah. Some dispensationalists promote the idea that the primary theme is the kingdom of God.¹⁴ Normative dispensationalists would agree that salvation, the kingdom of God, and Messiah Yeshua are all fundamental themes. However, each of these specific emphases can be included under a larger doxological umbrella.

For example, every time a sinner is saved, God receives all of the glory. With everything that Messiah said and did, He brought glory to His Father. Paul's magnificent doxology at the end of Romans 11 says it all: "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." (Rom. 11:36).

A unifying principle concerning the purpose of God in history must be broad enough to incorporate all of the subthemes or metanarratives in the Bible. Dispensationalist Michael Vlach effectively articulates this:

God's plans involve many enti-

⁹ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, p. 192.

¹⁰ Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and The Church: The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), p. 32.

¹¹ Christopher Cone, "An Interview on the State of Contemporary Dispensationalism"; interview by Adrian Isaacs, *Christopher Cone*, October 7, 2014, <https://drcone.com/2014/10/08/an-interview-on-the-state-of-contemporary-dispensationalism/> (accessed June 6, 2024).

¹² Earl Radmacher, "The Current Status of Dispensationalism and its Eschatology," in Kenneth Kantzer and Stanley Gundry, eds., *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 171.

¹³ Douglas Brown, "The Glory of God and Dispensationalism," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology*, p. 45.

¹⁴ Michael J. Vlach, *Dispensational Hermeneutics: Interpretation Principles that Guide Dispensationalism's Understanding of the Bible's Storyline* (Las Vegas: Theological Studies Press, 2023), p. 12.



ties like the universe, earth, land, covenants, people, angels, Israel, nations, the animal kingdom, and many other things. The Bible also records many historical events like creation, the fall, the flood, the spread of nations, the career of Israel's patriarchs, the exodus, Israel's conquest of the land, the captivities of Israel, and the ministries of Jesus and the apostles. Because God's creation is multi-dimensional and history involves these matters, Scripture addresses many of these things even though they are not Jesus.¹⁵

While it is apparent that not every jot and tittle in the Bible is about Yeshua, He clearly is the One who holds all jots and tittles together (Col. 1:17)!

A significant criticism voiced by covenant theologians is that dispensationalists do not have *enough* of a Christocentric interpretation of Scripture. Vlach refutes their claim in three ways:

First, dispensationalism proclaims the central role of Christ's person and work in Scripture and God's plans. Second, dispensationalism asserts that the proper way to see Christ's central role is through consistent use of grammatical-historical hermeneutics. Third, dispensationalism believes the non-dispensational Christocentric approach can lead to misunderstanding Bible passages, both by reading meanings into Bible texts that are not there and by missing the real meanings of Bible passages.¹⁶

Vlach's third point is vitally important. We commonly joke that the odds-on, all-encompassing answer to every Sunday School question for kids is "Jesus." However, if we as Bible students try to read the Messiah into texts that do not refer to Him, our interpretation will be flawed and we'll miss the meaning of the passage intended by God through His inspired biblical author. While a consistent

LGH interpretation is widely accepted as the hermeneutical standard for dispensationalists, the concept of a doxological purpose of God in history as a dispensational essential does not have the same broad support. Dispensationalist Paul Martin Henebury opines:

It is very clear that one can be a dispensationalist and not believe that the glory of God demonstrated in a multifaceted scheme is a critical belief of the system... If a person ignores this third point (*and we don't say they should*) [emphasis added], it will not make a difference as to whether or not they end up a dispensationalist.¹⁷

Brown counters:

What distinguishes a dispensational view of God's glory from other theological systems is the complete manifestation of God's glory in the millennium—that is, the theocratic kingdom restored to national Israel. Any theological system that undermines the completion of God's program with Israel diminishes God's glory.¹⁸

Dispensationalist and Ryrie biographer Paul Weaver gives a mediating position:

The glory of God is certainly a unifying principle... However, the glory of God seems too broad of an interpretive motif. This writer



Charles C. Ryrie
(1925–2016)

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁷ Paul Martin Henebury, "The Sine Qua Non of Dispensationalism? – Ryrie and Feinberg (Revised)," *Dr. Reluctant* blog, June 30, 2020, https://drreluctant.wordpress.com/2020/06/30/the-sine-qua-non-of-dispensationalism-ryrie-and-feinberg/#_edn3 (accessed May 29, 2024).

¹⁸ Brown, "The Glory of God," p. 46.

contends Ryrie's interpretive motif is the following: God's purpose for human history, the establishment of His theocratic kingdom... Movement towards the theocratic kingdom and its culmination is indeed the heart of dispensationalism.¹⁹

According to Weaver's extensive research, Ryrie believed that God's *overall purpose* was for His own glory while God's *specific purpose for human history* was the establishment of His theocratic kingdom.

Thus, in this author's opinion concerning dispensational essentials: (1) Should a consistent literal grammatical-historical hermeneutic be a *sine qua non*? YES! It is foundational to dispensationalism and essential for correctly understanding the Bible. (2) Should a doxological purpose be the unifying theme and a *sine qua non*? YES! The breadth and depth of God's glory, as seen in the Scriptures, make it the most dynamic and encompassing option. Hence, all three legs should remain firmly affixed to Ryrie's three-legged stool.

Have other dispensationalists carved additional legs or refined the legs to stabilize the stool further?

Subsequent Sine Qua Nons?

Since the publication of *Dispensationalism Today* in 1965, other dis-

pensationalists have weighed in with their thoughts concerning additional essentials or refinements. Do any of them deserve a good *oikonomia* (Greek for "household administration") seal of approval?

John Feinberg's Six Essentials of Dispensationalism

In 1991, dispensationalist John Feinberg nuanced Ryrie's *sine qua non* by offering six essentials.²⁰ Vlach summarizes his points as (1) multiple senses of terms like "Jew" and "seed of Abraham," (2) a hermeneutic in which the NT reaffirms and does not reinterpret the OT, (3) that unconditional covenants to national Israel in the OT (Abrahamic, Land, Davidic, and New) must be fulfilled with national Israel, (4) a distinctive future for Israel, (5) the church as a distinctive organism, and (6) a philosophy of history in which history is the gradual implementation and outworking of the kingdom of God.²¹ Points 1, 3, 4, and 5 could be used to bolster and clarify Ryrie's Israel-church distinction. Point 2 supports Ryrie's second *sine qua non* of a consistent LGH hermeneutic and will be discussed in the next section. Point 6 is an alternative to the doxological purpose, but it aligns with Ryrie's purpose for human history.

The Priority of Proper Priority

One of the main differences between dispensational and non-dispensation-

al theology concerns their respective "starting points" for understanding the Bible. Feinberg explains that "non-dispensationalists begin with NT teaching as having priority and then go back to the OT. Dispensationalists often begin with the OT, but wherever they begin, they demand that the OT be taken on its own terms rather than reinterpreted in light of the NT."²² Stallard adds, "The Old Testament is almost an afterthought to the non-dispensationalist who uses the New Testament like the presidential power of veto over exegetical results in the Old Testament text."²³

It would be disingenuous for God to reveal a prophetic message to an OT audience but then change its meaning from its original intention hundreds or thousands of years later. In essence, such a practice results in a different kind of replacement theology: replacing the plain meaning of an OT text *perceived* to be true by an OT audience with an *actual* meaning of the exact text newly revealed to an NT audience. This "bait and switch" hermeneutic can lead to significant contextual difficulties in understanding the OT. With such a dynamic, how can a student of the OT have any confidence in anything he reads, knowing that a NT passage could trump it? Progressive revelation does not include the abrogation of God's prior promises and prophecies. Reading NT meanings back into the OT is

¹⁹ Paul D. Weaver, *Charles C. Ryrie: The Man, His Ministry, and His Method* (Fort Dodge, IA: Exegetica Publishing, 2022), pp. 64-65.

²⁰ John S. Feinberg, ed., "Systems of Discontinuity," *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments, Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1988), pp. 67-85.

²¹ Michael Vlach, "Dispensational Theology," *The Gospel Coalition*, April 9, 2020, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/dispensational-theology> (accessed June 27, 2024).

²² Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, p. 77.

²³ Stallard, "Literal Hermeneutics," pp. 14-15.



as nonsensical as military historians studying tactics used in the First Persian Gulf War to better understand America's Revolutionary War!

Instead of *testament priority*, Vlach uses the term *passage priority* to assert that "the meaning of any Bible passage is found in that passage... Wherever it is found, a passage contributes to God's purposes in its own context. That is why God placed that text in the Bible."²⁴ Thus, synchronizing Stallard's and Vlach's ideas for a proposed *sine qua non* #4:

Dispensationalism adheres to a theological method prohibiting reading the New Testament back into the Old Testament.

Later revelation does not reinterpret or change the meaning of earlier revelation. Thus, OT prophecies yet to be literally fulfilled in the NT will be literally fulfilled in the future. As a result, OT unconditional covenantal promises from God to Israel will be fulfilled only to ethnic Jews, the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who have believed in Yeshua as their Messiah.

Stallard notes, "This is not literal interpretation of the Bible in general, but the guaranteeing of a literal interpretation of the Old Testament through the use of a correct theological method."²⁵ Since it is not a component of the LGH system, it could qualify as a fourth leg to be added to Ryrie's three-legged stool.

Conclusion

The charge that dispensationalism has only one *sine qua non* is fal-

lacious, shortsighted, and agenda driven. The Israel-church distinction is crucial. However, it is inescapably intertwined within the root system of a consistent literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutic.

Fruchtenbaum boldly proclaims, "Because only dispensationalism makes a consistent distinction between Israel and the church and insists on a consistent use of literal or plain hermeneutics, only dispensationalism allows for a fully developed Israelology as a separate division of systematic theology."²⁶

Dispensationalist Andy Woods remarks, "We believe that Israel has a purpose and a role in history and a right to her land. We derive these concepts from a consistently literal in-

terpretation of the Bible."²⁷ We believe these things because we believe in a God who is faithful and true to His Word. To think anything less robs God of His glory.

Ultimately, our allegiance must be pledged to the eternal Word of God (Is. 40:6-8). More important than evaluating whether dispensationalism is a *good* theological system is the determination of it as a *biblical* theological system. Does it help us understand what God is trying to communicate to us in His Word? The opinion of this writer is "Yes, most definitely." Ryrie's "three-legged stool," his codification of the basic interpretive essentials for dispensationalism, has helped millions accurately handle the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

²⁴ Vlach, *Dispensational Hermeneutics*, p. 36.

²⁵ Stallard, "Literal Hermeneutics," p. 17.

²⁶ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, p. 523.

²⁷ Andy Woods, *Ever Reforming: Dispensational Theology and the Completion of the Protestant Reformation* (Taos, NM: Dispensational Publishing House, 2018), p. 173.



J. Morgan Arnold is a Christian businessman, a pastoral intern at Cedar Creek Bible Church in Seven Points, Texas, and a board member for True Grace Books. He also has a BBA in Marketing from Texas A&M and is pursuing a Th.M. degree through Chafer Theological Seminary. As an author, he has contributed to the books *Grace & Truth Vol. 1* and *LOTUS: A Free Grace Response to TULIP*. His articles have appeared in the latest two editions of *Pneumatikos*, the *Journal of Chafer Theological Seminary*.

He and his wife have been married for 30 years and have two grown children. They live in Gun Barrel City, Texas.

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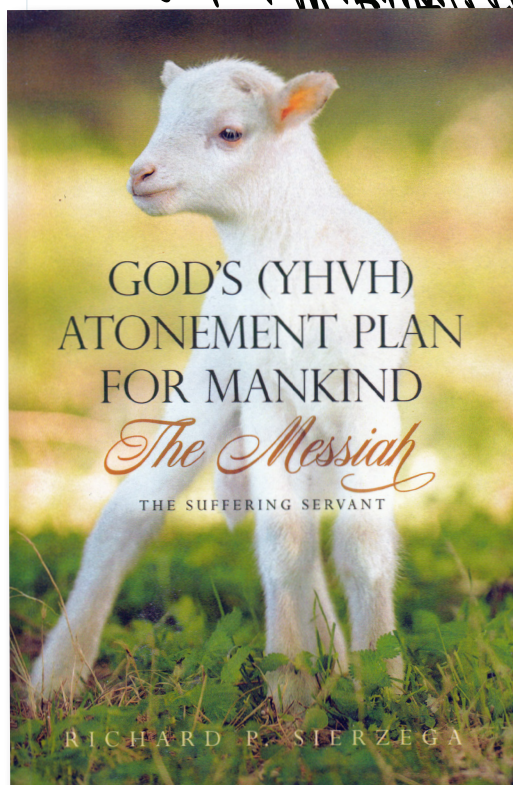
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Book Review

God's Atonement Plan for Mankind

By Mottel Baleston



How likely is it that a professional golf instructor without formal theological training would, after just three weeks of studying at Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies, be able to write and publish a 160-page overview of Messianic prophecy that impresses even veteran Bible teachers? Remarkably likely, as Richard Sierzega has proven. In less than half a year after attending the program at the Shoshanah Campus, he accomplished this feat with his book *God's (YHVH) Atonement Plan for Mankind: The Messiah – The Suffering Servant*.¹

Ariel Magazine rarely publishes book reviews of works not produced by the ministry itself, but Sierzega's book is an exception for good reason. It offers a comprehensive handbook and reference guide that illuminates the promises of the Hebrew Scriptures regarding the Messiah and demonstrates how Yeshua of Nazareth fulfilled those prophecies. The book covers over twenty-five of the most powerful Messianic prophecies, explaining them in everyday language, making these profound concepts accessible to all readers. Page after page reveals clear evidence that God has kept His promise to bring forth the Messiah.

What makes this book especially unique is its ability to be both accessible and theologically sound. Written in a conversational, easy-to-understand style, it still stands up to the scrutiny of experts. There is no fluff; instead, the book serves as both an introduction and a valuable reference tool for Messianic prophecy, one that readers will return to repeatedly. Sierzega openly acknowledges Dr. Fruchtenbaum's *HaMashiach: The*



Messiah of the Hebrew Scriptures as a key inspiration and resource in crafting his work.

What truly sets *God's Atonement Plan for Mankind* apart is its clarity. The conversational tone, as though a friend were guiding you through the material, makes it an engaging read. Yet, beneath this approachable style lies profound, unmistakable explanations of Messianic prophecy, offering readers a firm foundation for understanding God's Word. It's a resource that enriches and deepens one's appreciation for the fulfillment of prophecy through Yeshua.

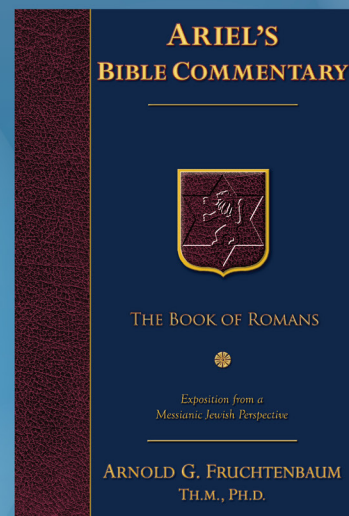
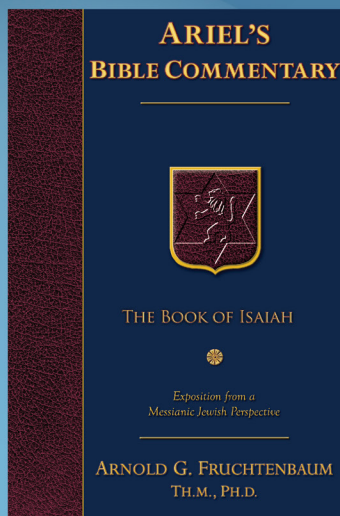
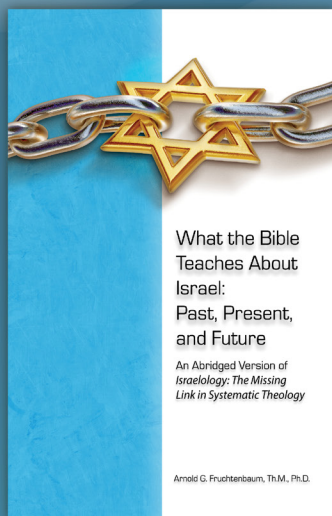
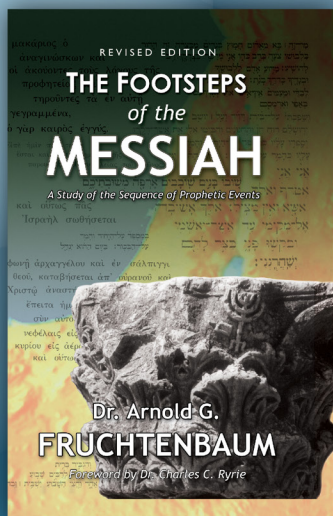
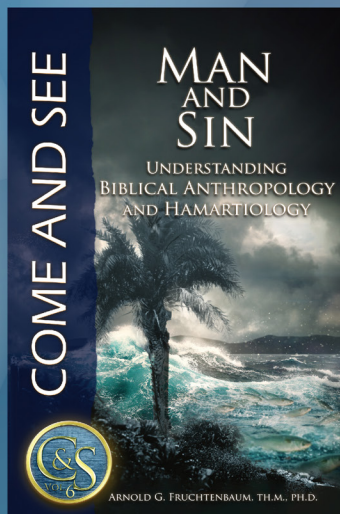
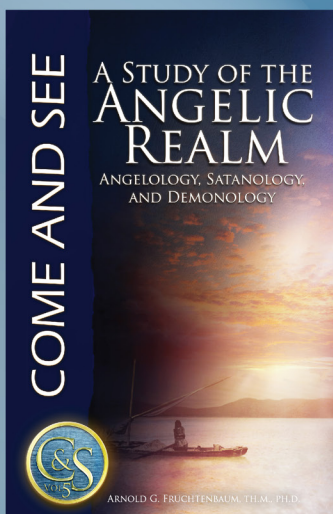
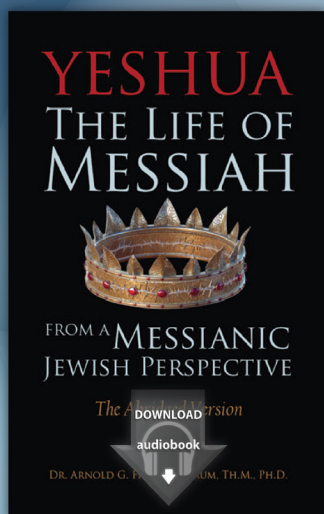
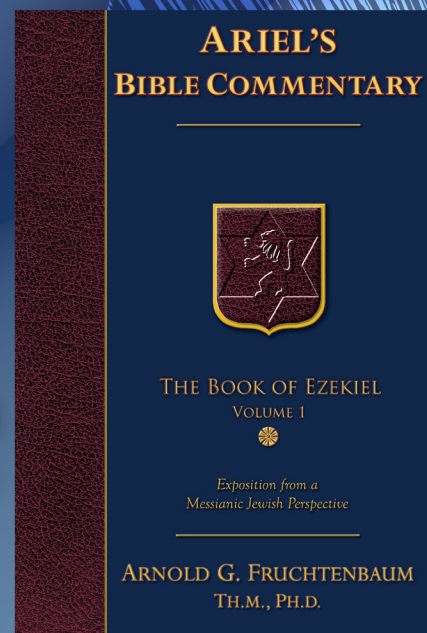
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Mottel Baleston is the director of the Messengers Messianic Outreach based in New Jersey (www.MessiahNJ.org).

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